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THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

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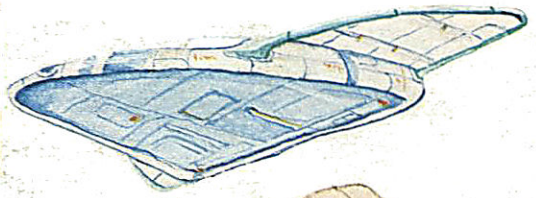

Special *TRAVELLER* Issue

"FLARE STAR" — ADVENTURE APPROVED FOR *TRAVELLER*

TERRORISM — NEW CAREER FOR TRAVELLERS

FIFTH FRONTIER WAR

KILLER LOOSE IN SCOTTSDALE

WIZARDRY

MORE "MURPHY'S RULES"

AND 9 PAGES OF REVIEWS

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NUMBER 46 – DECEMBER, 1981

Articles

TERRORISTS IN TRAVELLER * *William A. Barton*
Creating terrorist characters for Traveller 6
EXPANDING TRAVELLER * *William A. Barton*
Reviews of supplements and play aids published by various companies . . . 9
THE FBI AFFAIR * *Michael Stackpole*
A Killer game which rampaged in Scottsdale, Arizona 23
KILLER
New and deadly weapons and devices 26
CONSTELLATION CONTEST RESULTS
Solution of the word-search puzzle 39

Special Feature: Adventure Game Supplement

FLARE STAR * *William H. and J. Andrew Keith*
Folio adventure for Traveller 19

Computer Gaming

DEUS EX MACHINA * *Fred D'Ignazio and Allen L. Wold*
Game in the Computer / Computer in the Game 16

Reviews

FIFTH FRONTIER WAR * *William A. Barton* 4
WIZARDRY * *Forrest Johnson* 14
CAPSULE REVIEWS 28

GAMES: The Castle, Demonlord, Diadem, Dragonslayer, Ragnarok, Saga, Spacefarers, Star Viking, Sword Lords, Transylvania. SUPPLEMENTS: The Black Tower, The Outworlds: A Starsector Atlas, Thieves' Guild IV. MINIATURES: Personalities and Things that Go Bump in the Night. COMPUTER GAMES: Asteroids, Rings of Saturn. PUBLICATIONS: The War Machine.

Departments

WHERE WE'RE GOING 2
GAME MASTER 3
PBM UPDATE 38
CONTEST 39
LETTERS 39
CALENDAR 40
INDEX TO ADVERTISERS 40
NEWS & PLUGS 40
READER ADS 40
MURPHY'S RULES 40

ART IN THIS ISSUE: David Allee: cover; Virginia Campbell: 34; Steve Crompton: 6,8; K.C. Ellis: 9; GDW: 5; Paul Jaquays: 39; William H. Keith, Jr.: 20, 21; Denis R. Loubet: 3, 19, 23, 24; Richard Mather: 28, 40; Will McLean: mailer cartoon, 14, 15 (reprint courtesy of Sirtech Software); John Morrison: 38.

Publishers may wish to request a copy of our Recommended Artists List.

In This Issue

By popular demand, we have another special *Traveller* issue. This time, there's a game scenario by Marischal Adventures, which is approved for *Traveller* by GDW. Also, to the growing corps of nasty *Traveller* characters, we add terrorists. For boardgamers, there is a review of the related *Fifth Frontier War*. Those interested in new products for *Traveller* will find five pages of reviews conveniently grouped in a special section.

For computer gamers, we have a review of the hot-selling new adventure, *Wizardry*. For *Killer* fans, we have a story by Michael Stackpole, telling how he assassinated most of the staff of Flying Buffalo Inc.

On page 40, there is the second installment of our new feature, "Murphy's Rules." It won't be the last.

–Forrest Johnson

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Where We're Going

Well, after all of two months in our new offices, we're moving again . . . to the place that we (almost) went when we first started to move. Don't ask why; it's a long story, having to do with the iniquities of real-estate agents and the general application of Murphy's Law as it relates to small businesses. The bright side: we're getting pretty good at moving (not to mention painting walls). But I wish we could put out a game now and then. And, as it happens, we're going to.

Ogre / GEV

As of this writing (Nov. 5), we have reached an agreement with Metagaming, covering Ogre, GEV, and several other bones of contention. The final settlement has not yet been signed, but all parties (and their attorneys) have agreed on terms. This means that Ogre and GEV ought to be back in print sometime in the spring of 1982. More news on this next month, after we get the final papers signed and I have time to work out some publication schedules.

FGU Licensing

We have finalized an agreement with Fantasy Games Unlimited, whereby we will be producing licensed Cardboard Heroes for several of their games . . . *Villains & Vigilantes, Space Opera, Aftermath,* and *Bushido/Land of the Rising Sun.* The artwork will be done by FGU's Jeff Dee, who has shown that he can work to the standard set by Denis Loubet in the first four sets. The first of these to come out will be a V&V superheroes set (which will also carry the "Superhero 44" logo, by agreement with Lou Zocchi). We've seen the final art on ten of the figures, and are eagerly awaiting the rest. That first V&V set will come out at the same time as the *Traveller* set and the next three fantasy sets . . . whenever that is . . . maybe in 1984 . . .

* * *

Seriously, the other Heroes sets are crawling along like snails, but progress is visible. Denis has now completed two of his three sets, and is well along on the third; Paul Jaquays has sent us about 80% of the art for the set he's doing. It looks like January now. I hope.

* * *

The Cardboard Heroes plastic bases ought to be ready pretty soon; I looked at samples a couple of days ago, and approved them with changes. They'll come in black and white, and 28" worth of base – enough for one set of Heroes – will cost $3. These are wholly optional; the Heroes work just fine with their own cardboard bases. But there have been repeated requests for plastic bases, and, having looked at the samples, I have to say that they look pretty sharp. Fear not; I shall inflict a sales pitch on you when they're actually ready. In the meantime, don't order them yet, because we don't have them to send.

* * *

Having a little space left, I'm going to get on the soapbox about a recent trend at science fiction conventions – one that is both personally and philosophically offensive to me. I'm referring to the banning of weapons – even mock weapons – from costuming.

Part of the fun of a convention – for most of us, anyway – is to wear a costume and to enjoy the costumes others have made. Some of them are thrown together, while others are the elaborate fruit of weeks of work – but they're all self-expression, and they're all fun. And a large percentage of the costumes, not surprisingly, have a martial theme . . . because most of the world's best science fiction has dealt in one way or another with conflict. Now, what's a Conan without his sword, or a Space Viking with no blaster? Not much. But that's what some people want, and they're inflicting it on the rest of us.

Reading fanzine discussions, I'm amazed by the number of mealy-mouthed apologies for the weapons censors. Some blame it on "rowdies" (so throw them out!). Some claim to feel physically intimidated by the mere proximity of something that looks like a weapon. (I'm not kidding; that's what the letters said.) Some come right out and say "War is awful. Weapons cause war. If you want to wear a weapon, or something that looks like a weapon, you're an awful person and we don't want you around." Now these are the same people that will permit no criticism of a piece of writing, no matter how brutal or (pardon the expression) sick the themes may be. Freedom of speech! But they don't seem to regard costuming as a form of expression – at least, not one to be protected! They insist on imposing their prejudices on a field that's traditionally been free of such pompous nonsense.

I'm not really claiming a constitutional right to carry toy guns (though who's to say we don't have one?). I'm angry at the people who take themselves and their biases so seriously that they'd try to regulate *convention costumes.* Really. Can you believe it? I've been to more cons than I can count, and the ONLY weapons-related hassles I've EVER seen were people preaching about the nasty evil warmonger costumes. !!!!!

They'll take away *my* blaster when they pry my cold, dead fingers off the trigger.

–Steve Jackson

NEXT ISSUE

Next issue will focus on TSR's Dungeons & Dragons (and Advanced Dungeons and Dragons). The centerpiece will be "Kimburani's Tomb," the AD&D competition dungeon from TexCon '81.

There'll also be an article on "Remedial Role-Playing";

The questionnaire for the annual Game Survey;

Designer's notes for "Barbarian Prince";

And several other things that won't fit in this box.

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

KILLER

It is noted in the rules that an innocent bystander may not be used as a shield or be taken hostage. Does this restriction also apply to accomplices and combatants?

Earl S. Cooley III

An accomplice must be treated as a bystander – he or she did not volunteer to be shot, doused, or whatever. A player could definitely be taken hostage or used as a shield, provided that this could be done in a reasonably nonviolent fashion – that is, you should not grab them and physically wrestle them into a room, but you could hold a dart gun on them and invite them, on pain of "death" to accompany you.

– Steve Jackson

Car Wars

(1) When decelerating by 20+ mph, is the control roll made at the speed the car is traveling before deceleration or the speed after deceleration?

(2) When two cars collide at an angle (other than 90 degrees or head-on), how do you determine which side of each car takes damage?

(3) When attempting to avoid an obstacle (debris, paint, etc.) by performing a maneuver (such as a STEEP DRIFT) is movement of the counter done in one step (move 1" forward and ½" to the side simultaneously, avoiding an obstacle in front of the vehicle) or is it two steps (move forward 1", hitting the obstacle, and *then* moving ½" to the side)?

Warpwar

(4) May a warpship move to a starhex containing an enemy ship and then spend additional movement points to drop off systemships it is carrying before combat starts?

Wizard

(5) Assuming DAZZLE has no range limitation (as a special spell) what is to keep it from temporarily blinding everyone on the face of Cidri when cast? What about other special spells?

(6) Can STAFF be cast on the bow of an enemy archer, causing it to blow up in his hand for 3 dice damage?

RuneQuest

(7) Are experience rolls for skills made immediately after a successful use of the skill or is a week of reflection required, as with combat skills?

(8) If a character is badly wounded in a hit location and only has Healing 1 to mend with (it takes Healing 2 to cauterize a wound), how does this affect healing?

Randy Divinski

(1) Make the control roll at the speed the car is traveling before deceleration.

Otherwise the car may be going so slowly it would escape any effect.

(2) Damage is taken to the part of the car that is hit. If it seems to be a corner collision, damage is taken to whichever part would have taken the worst of it (i. e., almost head-on counts as head-on). If you can't decide, flip a coin.

(3) The former. Cars do not move in jagged angles, but in straight lines. The dotted lines on the Maneuver Chart show the true path of vehicles in each maneuver. Though movement may be computed as "one inch up and one-half inch over," the car's path is actually a diagonal line.

(4) (No answer received from Metagaming on this.) VI.1 says that warpships must stop their movement on any star hex occupied by enemy ships; VII says that combat occurs when ships of both players occupy the same star hex at the end of movement. Systemship drop is a part of movement, costing one point. This would seem to imply that systemships cannot be dropped until combat begins. However, it seems to play better if you assume that a WS cannot move past an enemy-occupied star, but can use any remaining "movement points" to drop systemships if it wishes.

(5) (No answer received from Metagaming.) Sorry – if you reread the description of the spell, you'll see that it specifies an area of 5MH from the wizard's own hex. Each special spell has its own limitations, described in the spell listings.

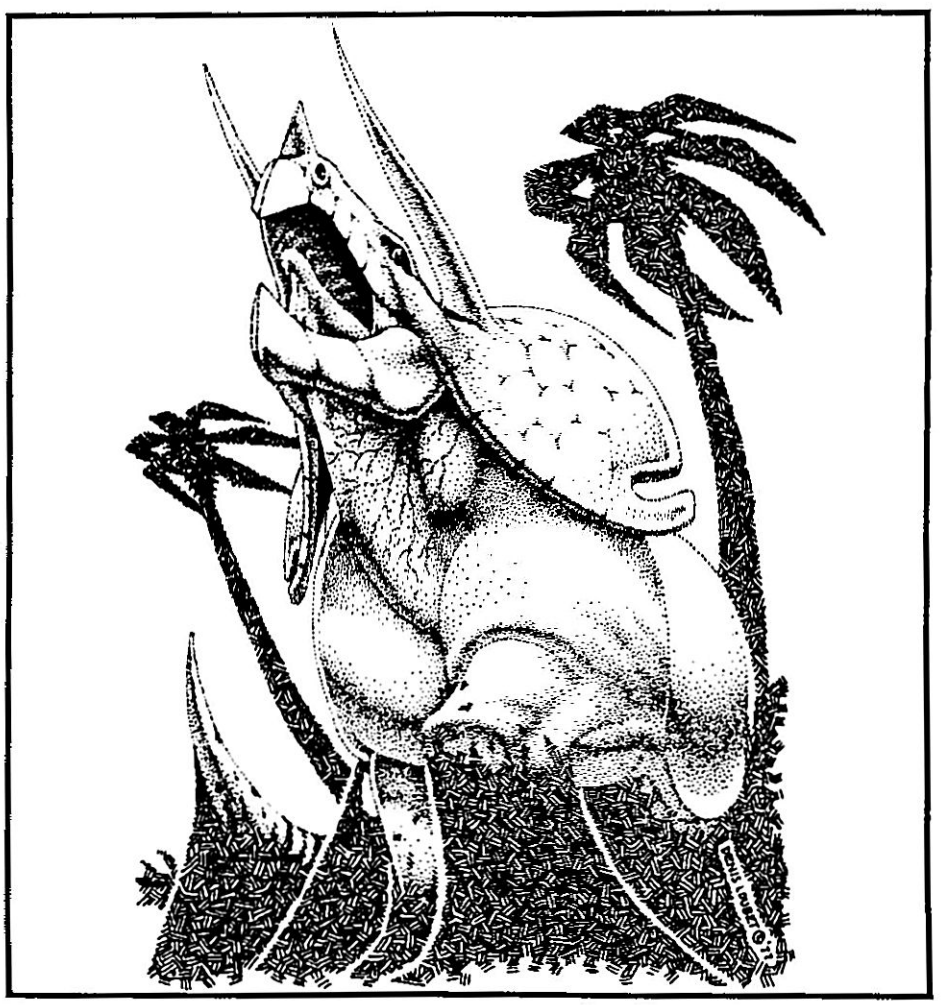
(6) (No answer received from Metagaming.) Common sense would say no – and the section on the wizard's staff reinforces this by saying that a staff is not created during the game except to replace a broken one. The STAFF spell, per se, is not an offensive weapon.

– Steve Jackson

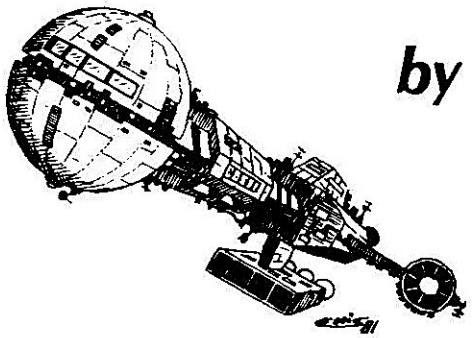
(7) (No answer received from the Chaosium.) "Other" skills are treated the same as combat skills for purposes of learning by experience.

(8) (No answer received from the Chaosium.) A character badly wounded in the chest or abdomen will bleed to death in two turns unless Healing 2 is used to stop the bleeding. The same is true if a limb is severed. Healing 1 will not usually stop the bleeding. However, if you can restore a chest or abdomen wound to positive hit points with Healing 1 spells (using one every five melee rounds within the two turn time limit), you will have effectively stopped the bleeding. This will not work for a severed limb. The First Aid skill (see Cults of Prax) can also be used to stop the bleeding.

–Forrest Johnson



Featured Review:
Fifth Frontier War



by William A. Barton

FIFTH FRONTIER WAR is apparently designed both as a *Traveller* tie-in and as an independent game system, though for obvious reasons it will appeal more to *Traveller* players. Similar in format to previous GDW games, FFW comes in the regulation flat box. The components reflect the usual GDW high standards—bright die-cut counters, separate chart sheets containing the CRTs and orders of battle, fleet composition charts, dice, and a beautifully executed map. FIFTH FRONTIER WAR appears to be—and is—a top-quality presentation. However, for reasons I'll make clear presently, SF board gamers who are not *Traveller* enthusiasts may want to stick to *Triplanetary* or *Double Star*, unless they are looking for a grand strategic challenge that makes *Imperium* seem simple by comparison.

Components

First, a few words about the game's components. Three counter sheets cover the various fleet and land units of the four warring navies (the Imperium, the Zhodani and the Zho's Sword Worlds and Vargr allies). One entire sheet is devoted to casualty markers. The counters bear the same ship silhouettes and unit symbols you've seen on past GDW counters.

The map is exceptional, based on the Spinward Marches map included with *Deluxe Traveller*. It provides a hex map of most of the Regina, Lanth, Vilis and Jewell subsectors and parts of the Cronor, Querion, Sword Worlds, Aramis and Rhylanor subsectors (plus a small section of Vargr space coreward of Regina). Surrounding the maps is a series of world surface boxes, one for each planet on the hex map. These name each world, and by their color or printed symbols and values duplicate much of the information found on the hex map. All squadrons and fleets are moved on the stellar map; all troops, except when transported, are kept in the world boxes.

The rule book is printed in the standard large-sized rule format as was *Triplanetary* and other non-*Traveller* games, rather than in the *Traveller*-sized format, as with *Azhanti High Lightning*. Perhaps this is to emphasize that FIFTH FRONTIER WAR will not have the direct applications to *Traveller* play that AHL does. The rules are quite clear and very complete, with a few minor lapses. Note, however, that the counter color code chart is located on the Imperial fleet composition chart and *not* on the chart set in the rule book; I searched for some time before locating it by accident. There are some typos, mainly in the examples of play, but nothing serious. The rules are, overall, quite clean. In fact, as was the case with *Triplanetary*, the biggest problems are in the separate chart sheets.

The order of battle charts are badly flawed. There are several discrepancies betweeen the number of units available on the charts and what is actually provided in the counter mix. The Imperial chart, for example, states that among the initial forces available are "8 (all) huscarle units" and "9 (all) mercenary units." Yet, there are only six huscarle units in the counter mix and there are *ten* mercenary units. Two more battle squadrons and six more cruiser squadrons than exist in the mix are listed in the Imperial forces. The Sword Worlds have two more cruiser squadrons in the mix than the Order of Battle allows. There are some discrepancies in the Zhodani troop mixes as well.

Annoying as this is initially, it has little real effect on play of the game. The Imperial forces are so outnumbered in the initial stages, one or two units aren't going to make a lot of difference. The random nature of the Imperial reinforcements entry later in the game makes it quite possible that the war may be over before the question of the missing squadrons comes up.

Complexity

Which brings us to the play of the game. How FIFTH FRONTIER WAR plays can best be summed up in one word: SLOWLY. Each turn is divided into four phases (reinforcement, movement, combat, and plotting) which together consist of 15 steps or substeps (16 if the optional black globe rules are used). Tie this in with the fact that most movement must be plotted in advance and that each player is going to have to control a *lot* of units spread across dozens of parsecs and world boxes, and you've got a game that is not one you can knock off in an evening—unless both players agree to a *very* early armistice. Now, this isn't necessarily bad. If you like complex game situations that take quite a while to resolve, or if your interest in the *Traveller* universe is great enough that you can stick with it to a reasonable conclusion, FIFTH FRONTIER WAR can be quite a rewarding system. But if you're looking for a fast-moving game you can play in a couple of hours. . . don't say I didn't warn you.

The set-up for FFW is rather involved, too, and the initial placement of forces may have some definite effects on the outcome of the game. Except for some special Zhodani units (the Ine Givar Guerrillas and a "secret base"), all Imperial initial forces are placed on the map first, giving the Zhodani player, who is launching a surprise attack, the opportunity to place his forces to the greatest effect. Then the Zhodani player plots his initial moves and the game begins. The Imperial player isn't allowed to plot movement of his fleets until the plotting phase at the end of the first turn, reflecting the Imperium's being taken by surprise, so that only scout squadrons (which don't require plotting) and fleets led by admirals with a plotting factor of 0 may move on the Imperium's initial turn.

This gives the Zhodani (and their allies) a great advantage over the Imperium in the opening segments of the game. Add more imbalancing factors—Imperial fleets must be plotted five turns in advance and Zhodani only four, and the Zhodani's greater strength in initial forces—and in most games you're probably going to see the Imperium take quite a beating in the first few turns. Even with the Imperial reinforcements available on the second and sixth turns, the early part of the game is going to be no picnic for the Imperial player. His primary strategy is going to be one of holding on against the Zhodani steamroller, perhaps making a few thrusts at back areas with a frontier fleet, hoping

the system defenses will slow the Zhos down until reinforcements begin to arrive. Expect Jewell to fall early on, unless you wish to lose a lot of forces defending it. Frenzie should be an early Zhodani/Sword Worlds target. Regina may hold, depending on how badly each player wants it.

Plotting

The preplotted movement of fleets may prove a pain for some players. However, the speed of communications in the *Traveller* universe is limited, and plotted movement provides a reasonable simulation. Still it's going to require a *lot* of paperwork, especially if the game reaches a stage where all 14 fleet counters of each side (plus two each for the Vargr and Sword Worlds) are in play. What lessens the problem somewhat is that, except for scouts, only squadrons organized into fleets may jump at all. While I tend to question the "realism" of this rule, it does make things easier by limiting movement. Another exception concerns fleets led by admirals with a 0 plotting factor. A fleet with an admiral does not have to plot its movement as many turns in advance as an unled one. Some admirals have a plotting factor of 0 (representing, I assume, a highly developed sense of intuition) and thus fleets they are with do not have to plot at all.

Plotted movement can direct a fleet to jump, hold in a hex to refuel, etc., or to detach squadrons, leaving them in certain systems. Jumps are conducted using the lowest jump number of any squadron in the fleet. Refueling in a system may be conducted in no time or over a number of turns depending on the fueling capabilities of each squadron and the facilities of the system. Squadrons which cannot "keep up" with the fleet must be plotted to detach. Plotted movement can be aborted when it no longer proves to be realistic (you've plotted a fleet of two cruiser squadrons to attack a system which has since gained a defense fleet of four battle squadrons), but the aborted turns must be spent on hold in a system until the new plotted turn starts. It can all get quite tricky attempting to outguess your opponent's plots.

Combat

Combat is quite involved, too. You're going to see a lot of casualty markers pile up fast. Combat occurs first between squadrons, then between squadrons and system defense boats. If the SDBs are eliminated, squadrons may bombard ground forces and land their own troops. Then surface combat takes place between troops and static defense forces. Five different CRTs are used to resolve combat. All are fairly straightforward, but I do wonder why the bombardment factor of a squadron is used against the SDBs rather than the attack factor. It works, but it seems unrealistic. One other thing worth pointing out is that squadrons may disengage from combat by jumping to another hex, provided they have enough fuel—apparently whether they are part of a fleet or not. So squadrons without fleets are not *completely* sitting ducks.

A lot of the game's flavor comes from the various types of special troop units and their abilities in combat. Some units are elite and count as double their current strength in combat. Armored units are doubled as well, quadrupled if they are elite. The Zhodani have psionic troops which receive automatic first fire in any combat. Their guerrilla units may operate in overt or covert modes; in the latter they may replace losses without expending the replacement points usually required to do so. Mercenary units only fire at half current strength once they've taken 50% losses (but the rules are unclear if elite or armored merc units fire at half the current printed strength or half the current *doubled* strength).

Play Balance

On the subject of game balance, in spite of the dire straits the Imperial player will find himself in early on, the game is fairly balanced. The Zhodani player has more units overall, but Imperial units are generally stronger. If the Imperium can hold on to enough systems and units in the initial Zhodani onslaught, once his reinforcements and replacement points finally begin to accumulate, he stands a good chance of turning near-defeat to victory. The longer the game lasts, the better his chance.

But make no mistake about it: The Imperium's lot in the opening segments of the game will not be a pleasant one. The addition of three fleet counters and admirals on turn two and the colonial reinforcements on turn 6 will avert a complete Zhodani sweep—and the system defenses will slow down the Zho's almost overwhelming forces. However, it won't be until some time after the random reinforcements become available on turn 10 that the Imperium can really start making a comeback. Until then, it's mainly defend and fall back, perhaps with a few hit-and-run raids, for the Imperium.

In most games, unless he's handled it badly, it'll probably be worth it to the Zhodani player to declare a unilateral armistice as soon as possible after that option becomes available, before the Imperium can take back too many worlds and their victory points (and gain some of its own). The Imperial player should never agree to an armistice that early unless the Zho have really botched things or he's just too tired to continue.

I do have some other questions about certain concepts in the game: Why senior admirals do not have the option to defer command to more capable "junior" admirals, why the independant worlds have to be conquered and controlled for either side to use their fueling facilities, why it costs no more to rebuild or replace a battle squadron than a scout squadron, and how, say, a desert world with a type E starport can support 500 system defense boats. Still, these anomolies do not really detract from the overall enjoyment of the game. And FIFTH FRONTIER WAR *can* be an enjoyable game—if, as mentioned earlier, you are interested in the outcome of events in the *Traveller* universe or you like a game that takes a lot of thought and a lot of playing time.

For SF gamers who fall into those two categories, I can heartily recommend FIFTH FRONTIER WAR.

FIFTH FRONTIER WAR is published by GDW and designed by Marc W. Miller. It retails for $14.98 and includes a 20-page rulebook, map, three counter sheets, four reference sheets, and two dice, boxed. Published 1981.

WARCON '82

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY — FEBRUARY 5-7, 1982

TOURNAMENTS: *Advanced D&D, The Fantasy Trip, Ogre/GEV, Ace of Aces, Squad Leader, Diplomacy, Kingmaker, Cosmic Encounter, Car Wars, Star Fleet Battles,* and MORE!!

The Aggie gaming convention, WARCON '82, is scheduled for February 5, 6, and 7, 1982. *This date is the weekend following the International Hobby Association show in Dallas.*

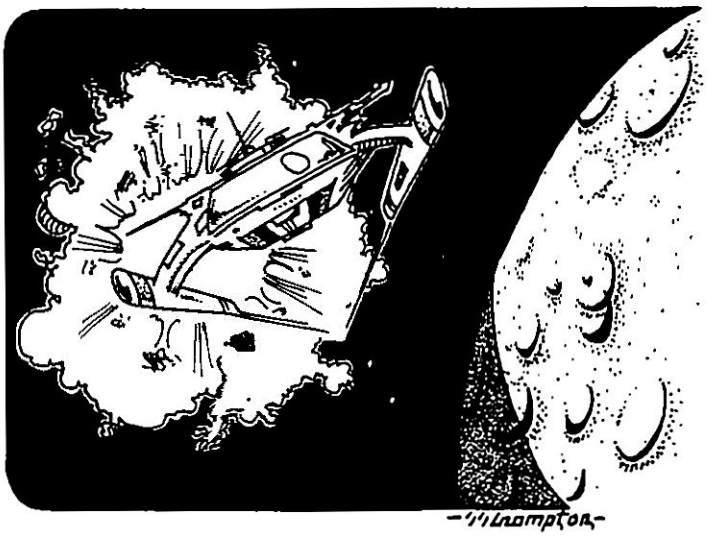
Dealers tables are $25 for the first table, and $10 for each succeeding table.

Registration is $6 before January 15, and $7.50 after and at the door.

If you want to sponsor or run a tourney, or have a scenario for AD&D, TFT, or anything else, please let me know. If you have something to offer in exchange for tables, I'm willing to negotiate. Write:

David (Kong) Heiligmann
Chairman, WARCON '82
P.O. Box J-1
College Station, TX 77844
(713) 845-1515

Terrorists in *TRAVELLER*



by Kenneth Burke and William A. Barton

In a far-reaching star empire such as the Imperium, worlds and groups of varying political philosophies have found themselves suppressed by the sprawling octopus of Imperial rule. It is inevitable that some of these groups decide to fight back. Such resistance may take many forms: open rebellion, economic slowdowns, or even the formation of groups of armed specialists. The methods of operation of these specialist groups include hit and run raids, assassination, kidnapping, sabotage, and the fomentation of fear among the "conquerors." This is the work of professional terrorists.

Terrorist organizations may be found throughout the Imperium and its fringes, ranging in size and scope from local planetary strike forces to massive interstellar armies. An example is the feared Black Lightning terrorists which plague the coreward-trailing reaches of the Imperium. Others include the Solomani Liberation Front (SLF). To spinward, several groups have allied to form a massive, ultrapowerful terrorist organization known, simply enough, as The Organization.

Originally thought to be merely another short-lived terrorist alliance when it began to operate in the Spinward Marches and Outrim Void sectors some 25 years prior to the Fourth Frontier War, The Organization has remained remarkably cohesive. During the war, it proved a constant thorn in the side of the Imperium, causing needed forces to be diverted from the Zhodani front to counter its activities. During the closing days of that war, Imperial intelligence operatives learned the reason for The Organization's success. It was trained and armed by Zhodani advisors, most likely agents of SORAG, the dreaded Zhodani intelligence agency.

With its Zhodani backing, The Organization continues to be a force to be reckoned with in the spinward areas of the Imperium and its client states. It was specifically to combat The Organization that the Ministry of Justice Special Branch created its secret IBIS commando strike forces. Success against the group has been minimal, however, due to the lack of concrete information on the location of The Organization's main bases and staging areas. Thought to be hidden somewhere in the Darkling region of The Beyond or the sparsely surveyed spinward sections of the Outrim Void, The Organization's nerve centers continue to elude Imperial attempts at discovery. With the onset of the Fifth Frontier War, The Organization's continued existence is more a threat to Imperial security than ever, and renewed efforts to eradicate it will undoubtedly be made as part of the Imperial strategy for countering the Zhodani offensive.

Traveller players may wish to create characters who have served or are currently serving as terrorists. Characters may join the terrorist service at age 18 or they may be drawn from characters who have mustered out or retired from other services – except, obviously, IBIS or the Ministry of Justice Special Branch. Characters who have served with the League of Assassins will not be able to serve as terrorists. (Since terrorist groups use their own personnel in assassination jobs rather than contracting with the Assassins Guild, there is a great deal of animosity between these organizations.) Other individuals may have trouble being accepted by terrorist groups, depending on past service, citizenship, or social standing.

The following tables are to be used to determine the terrorist's yearly assignments, skills and abilities, in the same manner as those of *Traveller* Books One and Four. Except where changed by this article, regular *Mercenary* rules remain in effect.

Enlistment. Following the generation of a character's stats and prior to his attempt to enlist in the terrorist service, his nationality must be determined, as it will affect his enlistment chances with certain positive or negative DMs. If the roll is unsuccessful, the character may attempt to enlist in some other service, trying again to join the terrorists after mustering out.

Once a character has successfully enlisted as a terrorist, a second roll must be made if he wishes to serve with The Organization rather than another terrorist group. A roll of 8+ indicates the character has been accepted directly into The Organization. If he fails the roll, he must serve an apprenticeship with another terrorist group before The Organization will consider him for membership. He may attempt the roll to join The Organization again at the end of his first 4-year term with the terrorists and, if that is unsuccessful, a final time at the end of his second 4-year term. If both these rolls are missed, The Organization will never again consider him as a recruit and he must serve his time as a member of the group he joined.

Reenlistment is achieved on an unmodified roll of 3+. A character who misses an attempted reenlistment roll has committed some offense against the terrorist group – failed an assignment, angered a superior, etc. On a roll of 9+, he has been condemned to death by the terrorists. On 7-, he has escaped the group's wrath, but will never be trusted or allowed to serve the cause again. On an 8 exactly, he has escaped but will permanently lose 1D Dexterity points (unless this would bring DX lower than 1, in which case it becomes 1). His arms and legs have been broken by the terrorists as an object lesson to others. (Nobody ever said being a terrorist was easy!)

Psionics. A benefit of enlistment in The Organization is that, thanks to its Zhodani advisors, the character may have the opportunity to be trained in psionics. Roll 3D for any character accepted into The Organization at the time of his acceptance. If they come up triples (3 numbers the same), the character has been chosen for psionic training; if the character has a social standing of B+, any doubles on the 3D roll will be enough to qualify for training. Determine psionic potential and talents as in Book 3. Note that a character accepted into The Organization at age 18 will have no -DM at all on the roll for psionic potential.

Psionic training will take up the character's entire first year assignment in The Organization. Use the time beyond that required for testing and training for monthly rolls to increase the character's psionic ability. If the character has not previously served as a terrorist, the following year's assignment will be basic training; otherwise, determine assignments normally.

The above procedure is the *only* method by which terrorist may obtain psionics while in the terrorist service. Terrorist groups other than The Organization will only have a psionic member if the character has been trained prior to terrorist service. The Psionics Institute, despite its "outlaw" status with the Imperium, will not train individuals who have been terrorists.

The Terrorist Career. Terrorists may serve up to 15 terms voluntarily, after which retirement becomes mandatory. Any character wishing to leave the Terrorist service prior to the end of his fifth term must roll 9+ on the reenlistment roll to successfully muster out; on a roll of 3-8, his terrorist superiors feel he knows too much to be allowed to leave, and he must remain in service until he rolls 9+ at the end of a term. After five terms with the terrorists, it is assumed the character is too incriminated himself to betray his former colleagues. After the fifth term, only a roll of 12 *requires* continued service.

Even terrorist characters who have left the services are not entirely free (unless reenlistment has been rejected by a roll of 2), and the character may be called upon at any time to perform a service for his old terrorist organization. (Once a terrorist, always a terrorist . . .)

Basic Training. During their first year of service with the terrorists, characters receive an automatic Combat Rifleman-1 skill and roll twice on the training table to determine the skills they learn in that period. This is considered their basic training and counts as the first assignment of their first 4-year term (unless the first year was devoted to psionic training).

Assignments. Each 4-year term consists of four 1-year assignments. To determine what each character's yearly assignment is, roll 1D on the General Assignment table for a result of Support, Action or Special Training. Support or Action assignments mean that the terrorist is participating in a possibly hazardous assignment, either as part of a main force or on a solitary mission, or as part of a back-up support team. Consult the Action table for specific assignment. A result of Special means the terrorist has been chosen for special training. Consult the Special Training table.

Special Training. There are six kinds of special training:

Starship Operations Training – Roll 1D to determine the starship skill received by the character: 1. Pilot; 2. Computer; 3. Navigation; 4. Ship's Boat; 5. Engineering; 6. Gunnery (choose *one*

Terrorist Enlistment

Enlistment DMs:	*4+**
-2	If Imperial citizen**
-3	If ex-Imperial military**
+2	If ex-Pirate
+1	If ex-Criminal (Rogue, etc.)
+2	If Military Dishonorable Discharge
+3	If served a Prison term
+2	If Social Standing -5
-2	If Social Standing 9-B
+1	If Social Standing C+***
+1	If of Solomani descent (+2DM if wishing to enlist in the SLF)

*An unmodified roll of 2 on enlistment attempt indicates that the terrorists suspect that the character is a MJSB plant and kill him outright.

**DMs for Imperial citizenry, military service, etc. may be applied to other nationalities (i.e., Zhodani, Aslan, etc.) if the terrorist group being joined is fighting other empires than the Imperium.

***Terrorist groups can use individuals who can move in high circles, obtain information, and exert influence not normally available to such organizations. This applies to hereditary nobles (rank due to initial die roll) or those who have advanced in non-military service *only*.

Terrorist Training

1. Gun Cbt	3. Brawling	5. Survival
2. Blade Cbt	4. Demo	6. Vehicle

General Assignment

1. Support	3. Action	5. Action
2. Support	4. Action	6. Special Training

Terrorist Action

2. Attack	8. Harassment
3. Hijacking	9. Robbery
4. Assassination	10. Assassination
5. Kidnapping	11. Hijacking
6. Sabotage	12. Attack

Assignment Resolution

	Survival	*Promotion*	*Skills*
Training	3+	NA	8+
Harassment	5+	12+	7+
Sabotage	6+	11+	7+
Robbery/Kidnapping	6+	10+	6+
Assassination	7+	10+	6+
Hijacking	7+	9+	5+
Attack	8+	8+	4+

DMs: For Survival – DM+ Jack-O-Trades skill level.
For Promotion – DM+ Leader skill level.

Special Training

1. Starship Operations	4. Infiltration
2. Commando	5. Assassination
3. Intelligence	6. Shipboard Assault

Terrorist Skills

Roll	*Terrorist Life*	*Terrorist Soldier*	*Terrorist Support*	*Combat Operations*	*Covert Operations*	*Terrorist Officer*
1	+1 ST	Blade Cbt	Medic	Battledress	Special Weapons	Interrogation
2	Gambling	Forgery	Vehicle	Heavy Weapons	Demo	Fwd Observer
3	+1 DX	Bribery	Mechanical	Gun Cbt	Unarmed Cbt	Tactics
4	Carousing	Gun Cbt	Electronics	Zero-G Cbt	Disguise	Liaison
5	+1 EN	Jack-O-Trades	Gravitics	Cbt Engineering	Escape & Evasion	Admin
6	Jack-O-Trades	Streetwise	Commo	Recon	Stealth	Leader

Terrorist Rank

Title	*Rank*	*Title*	*Rank*
1. White Pawn	1	7. White Rook	3
2. Black Pawn	1	8. Black Rook	3
3. White Knight	1	9. White Queen	4
4. Black Knight	2	10. Black Queen	4
5. White Bishop	2	11. White King	5
6. Black Bishop	2	12. Black King	6

Mustering Out Tables

Cash	*Material Benefits*
1. CR 2000	1. Middle Passage
2. CR 4000	2. +1 Intelligence
3. CR 8000	3. +1 Endurance
4. CR 16000	4. Blade
5. CR 32000	5. Gun
6. CR 64000	6. High Passage
7. CR 128000	7. Starship

type of Gunnery skill, as described in *High Guard*). Skill level received is determined by rolling 1D: 1-4 – the character receives a skill level of 1 in that skill; 5-6 – a skill level of 2 is received.

Commando Training – Up to eight skills are available. Roll 5+ for each skill: Survival, Recon, Gun Combat, Blade Combat, Demo, Heavy Weapons, Unarmed Combat, Battledress.

Intelligence Training – Up to six skills are available. Roll 4+ for each skill: Interrogation, Torture, Computer, Linguistics, Streetwise, Bribery.

Infiltration Training – Up to six skills are available. Roll 4+ for each skill: Disguise, Escape & Evasion, Vehicle, Counterfeiting, Forgery, Security.

Assassination Training – Up to six skills are available. Roll 4+ for each skill: Special Weapons, Gun Combat, Blade Combat, Bow Combat, Unarmed Combat, Poisons/Antidotes.

Shipboard Assault Training – Up to four skills are available. Roll 3+ for each skill: Vacc Suit, Zero-G Combat, Gun Combat*, Vacc Suit Maintenance.

(*If character is skilled in Zero-G Combat, Zero-G Weaponry must be taken. Otherwise Laser Weapons must be chosen as this Gun Combat skill.)

Characters with any skill level above 3 in any skill taught will be assigned as an instructor and will learn 1 level of Instruction skill instead.

Skills. Any terrorist character may roll from the Terrorist Life or the Terrorist Soldier tables. Only officer rank 1 and higher may roll on the Terrorist Officer table. A character whose assignment is Training may roll from the Terrorist Training table. A character whose Action Assignment is Sabotage, Robbery, Kidnapping or Assassination may roll on the Covert Operations table; a character whose assignment is Hijacking or Attack may roll on the Combat Operations table; a character whose assignment is Harassment may roll on either the Covert or Combat Operations table. If the character's general assignment was Support, he may not roll on the Covert or Combat Operations tables, but may roll on the Support table.

Rank. Terrorists do not go through any sort of OCS to become officers. They are simply summoned before a superior and issued a chesspiece denoting their rank. Terrorist groups do not have noncom ranks. A terrorist who is promoted becomes a White Pawn; promoted a second time, a Black Pawn; and so on. (Note that a Black Pawn is senior to a White Pawn, but still "rank 1.")

Mustering Out. Characters are entitled to a number of die rolls on the tables

equal to the number of terms they served as a terrorist. Characters of rank 1 or 2 are allowed one extra roll; characters of rank 3 or higher are allowed two extra rolls. Those with gambling ability may apply a +1DM to their die roll on the Cash table. Those with rank 6 may apply a +1DM to their rolls on the Material Benefits table. Terrorists may take their rolls from either table, but may not consult the Cash table more than three times.

Characters receiving the Gun benefit must choose a weapon with which he is skilled. After the initial receipt of a gun benefit, further rolls may be taken in additional guns or in additional skill levels on a gun received as a benefit; the same is true of the Blade benefit.

The starship benefit indicates that the character has received a 1,000-ton starship which he may design to his own specifications according to either *Traveller* Book 2 or *High Guard*. All accessories will be provided for the ship – auxiliary craft, computer programs, supplies – up to CR 100,000,000 worth of credit. Any money left over reverts to the terrorist group. The starship benefit may only be received once. Subsequent rolls are considered lost.

There is no retirement pay for terrorists. It is assumed that they will find methods of fending for themselves financially if the need arises.

Miscellaneous

Equipment. Generally, any equipment found in any of the *Traveller* books and supplements, including *Mercenary*, will be available to ex-terrorists due to their black market ties – even in areas where the law level, etc., might normally prohibit such equipment. Naturally, the prices will be somewhat higher for such equipment – usually 50% to 100% more than list price. The exact availability of any specific item is up to the referee.

Failed Survival Rolls. Since the life of a terrorist is a hazardous one, it is quite possible that a character may not even survive his initial term of service. If a character misses a survival check, roll two dice. On 6 or less he is dead. On 7+ he is wounded and discharged; 1D points are immediately subtracted from ST, DX or EN (choose which randomly) and he is mustered out at once, receiving no mustering out benefit for the term in which he is wounded. Alternately, the "Death" table in Paranoia Press *SORAG* may be used in such a situation.

Skills

All skills available to terrorists may be found in *Traveller, Mercenary,* or *High Guard*, or in the approved-for-*Traveller* supplements by Paranoia Press – *Scouts & Assassins, Merchants & Merchandise* or *SORAG*. Any additions or restrictions are listed below. For the convenience of those players who may not have the Paranoia products, a brief description of those skills is given below so that the referee may improvise (though it is recommended those supplements be obtained for the fullest enjoyment and optimum use of those skills).

Counterfeiting – Skill in making and passing funny-money. Found in *SORAG*.

Disguise – Skill in changing appearance temporarily. Found in *S&A*.

Escape & Evasion – Skill in avoiding traps, opening locks, evading searches or pursuers. Found in *S&A*.

Gun Combat – Choose a weapon from *Mercenary*.

Heavy Weapons – Choose any weapon listed under Support Weapons in *Mercenary*.

Linguistics – Skill in languages, especially recognition and translation. Found in *S&A*. Higher levels give better chance of accurate understanding of more languages.

Poisons & Antidotes – Skill in handling, detecting, planting and neutralizaing poisons. Found in *S&A*.

Security – Opening and detecting electronic locks, planting bugging devices, etc. Found in *M&M*.

Special Weapons – Characters may choose skill in either Garrote, Grenade Pistol, Quickdraw Holster, Hypo Gun, Throwing Knife or Taser. The skill and weapons are described in *SORAG*, except Hypo Gun and Taser from *M&M*.

Stealth – Skill in hiding in shadows, darkness. Found in *S&A*.

Torture – Skill in eliciting information through the use of pain. Found in *SORAG*.

Unarmed Combat – Use of hands and feet as "blades," elbows and knees as "daggers" or head as "club" in hand-to-hand combat. Found in *S&A*.

Vehicle – Choose from the vehicle list in *High Guard*.

Vacc Suit Maintenance – Skill in repair and upkeep of vacc suits. Found in *M&M*.

Expanding *TRAVELLER*

by William A. Barton

Here follows a special section of reviews of Traveller-related products.

ASLAN, DROYNE, K'KREE (Martian Metals); $2.95/pack. 15mm *Traveller* figures. 12 figures (3 K'kree) in a bubble pack. Released 1981.

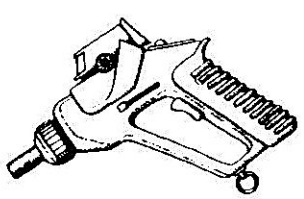
Martian Metals has at last turned its attention to the major alien races of the *Traveller* universe. There are 12 figures each in the Aslan and Droyne packs and three of the larger Centauroid K'kree in that set. The Aslans are Tech Level 9-12 figures, showing vacc suited/combat armored figures, and unarmored figures. The three K'kree are Tech 12 figures, wearing light armor and carrying weaponry. The Droyne figures represent the various Droyne castes, primarily warriors, sports and leaders, as pictured in *Traveller* adventure 3, *Twilight's Peak*. The sport figures even carry the "racket" pictured in that adventure.

The figures are nicely detailed, as usual with MM figures, and relatively free of flaws or flash. The Aslan carry *recognizable* gauss rifles, a welcome relief from some of the obviously non-*Traveller* weaponry of earlier figures.

The main problems with these alien figures are minor, but still notable: The Droyne figures are really too large for 15mm scale compared with other MM figures – they are as tall as the Aslan figures. In the *Traveller* reality, they would be about the right height to use with 25mm human figures. Of course, to have made them smaller would have eliminated most of the detail on the figures, so this was, I suppose, unavoidable. The K'kree seem a bit large, too, but this is less noticeable. All of the Aslan and Droyne figures are cast spread-eagle, requiring the arms to be bent for different positions. Another annoying, but unavoidable, feature is that the wings of the Droyne must be glued on.

Along with the earlier pack of Vargrs, the addition of Aslan, Droyne and K'kree almost completes the roster of the major races in MM *Traveller* figures. Only the Hive is still absent (hint, hint). Even a new set of Zhodani is in the works. Good job, MM! Keep it up.

– *William A. Barton*



CRUCIS MARGIN (Judges Guild); $5.98. Designed by Dave Sering. Approved for use with *Traveller*. 32-page guidebook, 22" x 34" sector map backprinted with 8 planetary maps. Published 1981.

CRUCIS MARGIN is Judges Guild's third star sector for *Traveller*, forming (along with Ley Sector, the Glimmerdrift Reaches and a still unreleased fourth sector) the Gateway Quadrant of near-Imperial space. CRUCIS MARGIN is set up in the same format as the earlier JG sectors, with an overall sector map with individual planetary maps of some of the sector's worlds printed on back, and a guidebook showing the individual subsectors, providing a history and examination of the political units of the area and offering encounter and rumor tables for the referee's use when running characters through the systems of the sector. The Crucis Margin is even more of a frontier region than JG's previous releases; like Paranoia Press' Beyond and Vanguard Reaches, it is completely outside the Imperium. The only Imperial presence at all is in its sole client state in the sector, the Sphere Felix. There is even a client state of the Hive in this sector, giving *Traveller* players their first real contact with that empire. Other states in the Margin are quite varied, including Chhung Kuo, originally settled by Solomani Orientals, and the Mandanin Co-Dominion, first introduced in *Glimmerdrift Reaches*. The sector takes its name from the major political entity in the area, the Union Crucis, a state torn by strife as four factors war within its borders for independence.

As with the earlier JG sectors, several intriguing situations are set up, many within the rumors and encounter charts. Whole adventures can be derived from any one of these, though the referee will have to do a lot of work – and probably much improvisation – to make the most of these. The table of space encounters, including such exotic hazards as comets, ion clouds and nebulae, should provide some interesting interstellar travel if used sparingly and to full effect. The presence of several states, not all friendly to one another, and a number of independent worlds ripe for exploitation can make for exciting situations, as can the possibility of interaction with traders of the Hive and the K'kree (Centaurs).

Most of the problems with CRUCIS MARGIN are the same as were found in the two earlier sector supplements. The large map doesn't show the individual subsectors within the Margin, making it a bit difficult to tell exactly which subsector a group is in while traveling through the area. The fact that the Margin is all non-Imperial space and is mostly small states, the borders of which *are* outlined on the map, makes this less a problem than it could have been. The planetary maps printed on the back are difficult to use on such a large sheet and JG should consider printing them inside the guidebook in future releases.

CRUCIS MARGIN will undoubtably open up new areas of adventure on the trailing edge of the Imperium for those adventurers looking to escape the ravages of the Fifth Frontier War to spinward. Unless the dollar price hike over the earlier sectors is too much for you, this supplement should join them in your *Traveller* library.

– *William A. Barton*

DOOM OF THE SINGING STAR (Judges Guild); 11.98. Designed by Dave Sering with Dan Hauffe and Joe Swinnen. Approved for use with *Traveller*. One 8½" x 11" 64-page rulebook, seven 22" x 35" sheets of deck plans, backprinted. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

DOOM OF THE SINGING STAR is Judges Guild's most ambitious *Traveller* adventure to date. It features several scenarios centered around the 36,117-ton Brilliant Gem class armed luxury liners and their 13,363-ton module ships. Complete deck plans are provided for the liners and module ships, which run routes throughout JG's Glimmerdrift Reaches sector. The rule/scenario book provides descriptions of the various decks of the ships, a review of the nation-states in the Reaches, general stats on the ships, a list of stats and descriptions of crewmembers and passengers for use as NPCs and 10 scenarios, along with a map and description of Resort World, where three of the scenarios take place.

The various scenarios of DOOM OF THE SINGING STAR are quite diverse – from the almost obligatory piracy and dangerous-beast-loose-aboard scenarios to a raid on a military camp holding the crew and passengers of the *Singing Star* and a submarine/surface ship clash on Resort World. The latter is perhaps the most interesting scenario in the lot, being the only wet naval battle yet published in the *Traveller* universe. And it gives useful guidelines on such sea battles so that players can adapt the concept to other sea-going situations. The inclusion of an overall sector map of Glimmerdrift is helpful, too, especially for those who lack that supplement. The deck plans do show more detail – chairs, consoles, tables, etc. – than in previous JG plans, though not nearly as much as in the FASA ship plans.

In fact, the main disappointment of DOOM OF THE SINGING STAR lies in the deck plans. For one thing, they are printed on paper that, though not quite as thin as tissue paper, could be considered the next best thing. It's nearly impossible to move the plans around or even to try to flatten them enough to use miniatures without tearing them. They are so thin that the decks backprinted on the sheets show right through. The backprinting itself makes it unfeasible to have action on certain decks at the same time, since some may be printed on the back of others you wish to use – and at $11.98, the set is too expensive to purchase two of for that purpose. Some of the plans are smudged, too, apparently from being folded together while the ink was still wet. The rule/scenario book has several typos evident – including a reference to a nonexistent rumor table.

While there are several good points about DOOM OF THE SINGING STAR, the lack of planning behind the deck plans coupled with the high price of the package make a recommendation difficult. If you don't mind flimsy plans, you may find much of use in this adventure. Otherwise – caveat emptor.

– William A. Barton

FIGHTING SHIPS (GDW); $3.98. Designed by Tim Brown. One 6" x 9" 48-page booklet. Published 1981.

28 different ships in use by the Imperium are presented in these pages of FIGHTING SHIPS, complete with *High Guard* stats, component descriptions, a bit of background on each ship class, and illustrations by Paul Jaquays. Vessels range from the 20-ton gig to the 500,000-ton *Tigress*-class dreadnaughts. Some ship types have appeared in other *Traveller* supplements, but others are depicted here for the first time. Along with the ship descriptions is an introductory section explaining the functions of imperial naval bases, naval depots and way stations, including a listing of all such bases in the Spinward Marches.

With these ready-made ships, impromptu naval battles can be fought at the drop of a fighter without having to take the time to design vessels from scratch using *High Guard*. And the referee now has a whole new set of ships to use for starship encounters. The illustrations, which range from adequate to quite good, give one a more concrete idea of how some of the configurations appear, aiding in the designing of original ships as well. The heavy fighter will be a welcome addition to all those who have complained of the uselessness of the smaller *Traveller* fighters presented up to now.

A few problems are evident. Some of the illustrations don't quite match the ship descriptions. This is especially noticeable with the number of fighter tubes listed. The drawing of the 200-ton system defense boat appears too small. And the heavy fighter isn't pictured at all. Some of the ships which have appeared before display differenced from their earlier versions, though these are mostly minor. And there are a few discrepancies and typos to be found in the text; for example, the strike carrier has a factor-J meson gun in the USP, but the text states it carries a factor-E gun. The final section on fleet auxiliaries mentioned in the introduction seems to have been omitted altogether.

Even with these omissions, none of which are major, FIGHTING SHIPS is well worth adding to your *Traveller* collection.

– William A. Barton

FLIGHT OF THE STAG (Marischal Adventures); $2.00. Designed by J. Andrew Keith. Approved for *Traveller*. One 8½" x 11" 4-page folio. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

FLIGHT OF THE STAG is the first in a series of folio adventures published by the new Marischal Adventures company. Each deals with the exploits of the crew of the *Gazelle*-class close escort *Stag* during the Fifth Frontier War. FLIGHT OF THE STAG concerns the *Stag*'s attempt to escape Zhodani forces and escort the pro-Imperium Prince of Thamber, an independent planet overrun by the Zhodani, to Imperial space. It is designed either as a stand-alone adventure, or as the first in a campaign series. The adventure includes a description of the basic situation (giving a brief history of the early days of the war near the Querion/Vilis/Sword Worlds/Darrian borders), referee notes, a description of the *Stag*, a map of the area, encounter tables and encounter descriptions.

Though relatively brief, FLIGHT OF THE STAG is a remarkably complete and satisfying adventure. The situation is adequately presented so as to exclude any ambiguities or problems, yet is open enough to allow for referee additions and innovations. The map is a nice aid, allowing play even if a copy of *The Spinward Marches* isn't handy. And the illustrations, as is typical of Bill Keith's work, are excellent.

I find few problems with this adventure. A couple of minor typos have crept in, but no serious flaws there. Players will need *Traders & Gunboats* and *High Guard* to play the scenario fully, but most will already have these, so no problems should arise (and an alternate combat system can be used if HG isn't handy). Some may find the $2.00 price a bit steep for a 4-page adventure, but STAG actually is a better adventure than some on sale at three times the price.

I highly recommend FLIGHT OF THE STAG as an excellent example of a brief, simple, yet highly playable adventure for *Traveller*.

– William A. Barton

HYDRONAUTS (Group One): $8.95. Designed by Group One. Approved for use with *Traveller*. One 8½" x 11" 50-page book, 2-page encounter chart, 22" x 17" full-color map, ziplock bag. Published 1981.

HYDRONAUTS is Group One's most ambitious *Traveller* adventure to date. Like most of their offerings, it is more a setting than an actual scenario and can be used for whatever situation the referee wishes. The idea behind HYDRONAUTS is almost unique–underwater adventures. The subject has been touched on briefly with the submersible in *Research Station Gamma* and in an Amber Zone in the *Journal*, but this is the first full-scale adventure dealing with adventures under the sea. The setting is the planet Dagan (Dagon?), presumably in Group One's Theta Borealis sector, though this isn't specified. Dagan is a "backwater" world, generally ignored by a local trade alliance known as the Protectorate until it is discovered that its aquatic humanoid inhabitants make use of a virtually indestructible alloy called ivo. The race to exploit the discovery is interrupted by the impact of an asteroid with the planet, melting its ice caps and submerging its land mass–apparently wiping out all land life with it. Now the competing groups within the Protectorate must search the depths to find the ivo production center, somewhere on the sea floor. Plans and stats for two submarines and their crews, encounter charts, several sea beasts and plans for the capital city of the world and the ivo plant aid the referee in administering the adventure. The map shows the planet as it was before the disaster in the event the referee wants to stage some action before the flooding of Dagan.

It appears that more research and effort has gone into HYDRONAUTS than previous Group One adventures. It's certainly more cost-effective than earlier releases – more than three times the material for only $2.00 more. The subs and their crews are quite interesting and should provoke exciting incidents whether used as player-characters or NPCs. And the sea beasts presented are quite formidable and, knowing the diverse types of life forms in our own oceans, much more believable than earlier G1 beasties. (The coral suckers are especially fiendish.)

Unfortunately, the worst aspects of G1's releases are still to be found in HYDRONAUTS

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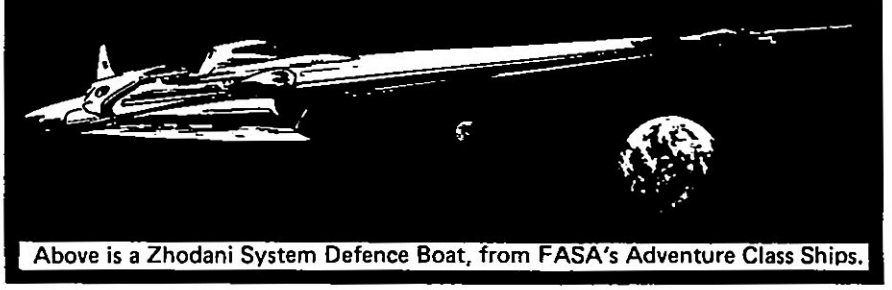

Above is a Zhodani System Defence Boat, from FASA's Adventure Class Ships.

as well. The grammar and spelling problems aren't as bad as in other adventures, but the sloppy-looking type-written text remains. And G1's annoying habit of leaving out important items manifests itself again here. Both subs are said to be armed with torpedo tubes – yet none are listed on the sub diagrams and no rules are provided for using torpedoes either. (See JG's *Doom of The Singing Star* for guidelines on those.) One sub carries carbines with special electrical and explosive bullets, but while some of the special weapons of the sea creatures are set in a new weapons table, these carbine bullets are omitted. There are problems with the planetary stats, too.

Still, if you don't mind fiddling around with some areas and making up your own data to cover what is missing, you might find the idea behind HYDRONAUTS worthy of your attention – especially if you're one of those refs who doesn't always have the time necessary to create your own adventures from scratch. If you haven't liked G1's past efforts, though, you probably won't like this one, either.

–William A. Barton

LIBRARY DATA (A-M) (GDW); $3.98. Designed by Frank Chadwick, John Harshman, Marc W. Miller and Loren K. Wiseman. One 6" x 9" 48-page booklet. Published 1981.

LIBRARY DATA (A-M) will provide you with most of the information on the *Traveller* universe without buying up the published adventures. It covers most of the important library entries from the adventures, such as entries on Imperial Research Stations and Chirpers from Adventure 2, Imperial Warrants from Adventure 1, the Droyne from Adventure 3, the essay on the Solomoni from *Argon Gambit*, the Aslan from the *Journal* and the article on the Imperium that appeared in *Different Worlds*. Other familiar items include the *Journal* article on the Emperors of the Third Imperium, the chronology of the *Traveller* universe and several other entries, including those on the Hive and the K'Kree (Centaurs) which appeared in the *Aliens* handout distributed at *Traveller* seminars at this summer's conventions. Brand new items include an essay on the megacorporations of the Imperium, information on the Aslan Border Wars of *Dark Nebula*, a history of the Vilani Imperium, the revelation of the Droyne homeworld, and other entries of interest to the dedicated traveller.

The entries in LIBRARY DATA (A-M) seem well chosen to further flesh out the bones of the *Traveller* universe in players' minds – without revealing anything that would spoil any of the published adventures for those who haven't yet played them. The illustrations of some of the items aid in this, too. Particularly welcome is the illustration of the battle tender, a ship class curiously omitted from *Fighting Ships*. The inclusion of the map of the Imperium is a nice bonus for those who don't yet have a copy.

I have no real complaints at all with LIBRARY DATA (A-M) – except that I wish it could have been possible to include the rest of the alphabet without dropping any of the present entries. I think you'll find it the best source of information on the *Traveller* universe anywhere.

– William A. Barton

MAROONED / MAROONED ALONE (GDW); $4.98. Designed by Loren K. Weisman. Supplement for *Traveller*. One 6" x 9" 48-page booklet. 2-8 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

If you're a *Traveller* player who enjoys cross-planet treks, MAROONED / MAROONED ALONE, Double Adventure 4, will give you the opportunity to travel with a new twist – on foot. Yes, there's no comfy ATV or air-raft for this journey as a group of adventurers (or a lone one) attempts to "hoof it" across the wilds of the planet Pagliacci in the Solomani Rim, facing the dangers of harsh weather, dangerous country and relentless pursuit. The adventure includes new encounter tables for the various terrain types of Pagliacci, an extra-large planetary map, pregenerated characters, detailed information on the effects of hunger, exposure to extreme heat and cold, and other survival hazards – including jungle rot – and reprints the contents of the survival kit previously featured in the *Journal* – an item players will find most useful in this adventure.

The encounter tables and information sections of each environment are quite detailed, providing guidelines on animal, human, and special event encounters and on the varying conditions – temperature, food and water availability – from season to season. The desert and polar sections give accounts of how much heat and cold can be endured before damage occurs, keyed to protective measures, from none to wearing a shelter suit or vacc suit. A revised system is used for calculating wound effects and recovery time, more appropriate to the situation than the regular *Traveller* system. And MAROONED ALONE, though designed for a referee and one player, can be played solo with some minor difficulties – a nice bonus.

There are a number of problems in MAROONED/MAROONED ALONE. It isn't *really* a double adventure in the sense of two separate scenarios, as in previous doubles. Both scenarios cover essentially the same situation,

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one with a group of adventurers and one with a single character, and neither adventure is complete in itself – the encounter tables and information for the two are scattered through both halves. Except for the situation section in MAROONED ALONE, neither adventure directs you to the other for the rest of the information needed – a bad oversight, especially in ALONE, which is unplayable without the ref info in MAROONED. Other errors include one amusing typo that puts the group in the middle of a stampede of glueberry trees. I also find it hard to believe that the 23-kg survival kit would fit in the lone adventurer's vacc suit foamed ablative reentry kit!

Still, if your players haven't tired of planetary journeys after *Across the Bright Face/Mission on Mithril* and *Twilight's Peak*, they'll find a welcome challenge in MAROONED/MAROONED ALONE.

– William A. Barton

ORDEAL BY ESHAAR (FASA); $6.00. Designed by J. Andrew Keith and William H. Keith, Jr. Approved for use with *Traveller*. One 6" x 9" 44-page booklet. 3-8 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

With ORDEAL BY ESHAAR, its first published *Traveller* adventure, FASA has propelled itself to the top of those companies producing approved-for-*Traveller* adventures. Designed by frequent contributors to the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* J. Andrew and William Keith, ORDEAL BY ESHAAR concerns diplomacy and intrigue on an alien planet mere parsecs away from the Zhodani Consulate soon after the start of the Fifth Frontier War. The player-characters have been hired to bolster the security force of the Imperial delegation to Eshaar and must act as guards for the Embassy Enclave and for the Imperial survey missions searching for a silicon-based substance called Affas – a mineral that will have an effect not only on the war effort, but on the relationship with the natives, should it be found. The local Ashah, who look like one-eyed, tentacled centipedes, believe the very planet is alive and will show its favor by bestowing Affas on the outworlders who deserve its friendship. The situation is further complicated by the presence of a Zhodani delegation and a visiting group of Vargrs – all of whom must share the same embassy enclave with the Imperial delegation – also seeking favor with the natives. And the Zhodani seem to be doing better than the Imperium, losing far fewer personnel to the hostile environment of Eshaar, even when forced by circumstance to experience the Ordeal by Eshaar; a multi-kilometer trek across the planet on foot with only a vacc suit and air tanks to aid in survival. Somehow, the players have to help tip the diplomatic balance in favor of the Imperium – perhaps by surviving an Ordeal themselves . . .?

ORDEAL BY ESHAAR is complete with everything a referee needs to play out the situation: Event tables, rumors, situations, maps and plans of the embassy enclave and surrounding areas and stats for NPCs of the embassy personnel – including Zhodani and Vargr. The situation is unique in that the players need to think and plan out their actions so as not to disrupt the delicate diplomatic situation. This is definitely not a shoot-it-out adventure (although, depending on the players' actions, such could occur). The inclusion of the Argosy Traveller ATV and the G-Carrier stats and descriptions (the latter found only in the 2nd ed. *Traveller*) is an added bonus.

There are few problems in ORDEAL BY ESHAAR. A couple of rooms on the deck plans for the enclave haven't been designated; a typo or two has slipped in. The week-by-week nature of the action might cause some players to feel a bit strait-jacketed at times, less free to act as they wish, but a competent referee can easily compensate for this.

ORDEAL BY ESHAAR is undoubtably the best non-GDW *Traveller* adventure published by anyone so far – and it ranks high among GDW's own offerings. Recommended.

– William A. Barton

STARSHIP LAY-OUT SHEETS (Games Workshop); $5.50. Approved for use with *Traveller*. One tablet of 50 8½" x 11¾" half-inch grid sheets. Published 1981.

Each 8½" x 11¾" tablet contains 50 sheets, each with a 8" x 11" grid and a section at the top displaying the various symbols for bulkheads, doors, hatches, etc., with room for the name of the ship being depicted and the deck each particular sheet shows. The slick cover displays how the sheets are to be used with ship designs from GW's *IISS Ship Files*.

The half-inch grid sheets are nice to have as this size is not easily found, most RP systems which use miniatures being designed for 25mm and inch-square grids. The half-inch size is perfect for use with the 15mm SF figures of Martian Metals and Ral Partha. Lacking these, the half-inch-square counters in *Snapshot* and *Azhanti High Lightning* will work well on this size grid. By cutting off the top section and taping several of the grid sheets together, a serviceable "battle board" may be made for use with *Traveller* ground actions.

The main failing of these grid sheets is that, of course, to portray any large ships, several sheets will have to be used. And with several large multi-decked ships, the sheets are going to go quickly. The price, too, is a bit high for a tablet of only 50 sheets, but this is a problem with all import items.

Still, the avid *Traveller* player or referee should be able to find many uses for these half-inch grid sheets in a campaign.

– William A. Barton

TRILLION CREDIT SQUADRON (GDW); $4.98. Designed by Marc Miller and John Harshman. Adventure for *Traveller*. 6" x 9" 47-page booklet. For two or more players; playing time indefininte. Published 1981.

TRILLION CREDIT SQUADRON is GDW's newest adventure for *Traveller*. Unlike previous adventures, TCS involves squadrons of starships in combat rather than individual characters adventuring on various worlds or aboard ships. Each player takes the part of a naval commander responsible for first designing a fleet within certain parameters, then commanding this fleet in combat with those of other players. The rules cover five separate concepts or scenarios: the Billion Credit Squadron, in which players are restricted to a mere billion credits with which to build their fleets; the Trillion Credit Squadron, in which the ante is upped considerably; the Trillion Credit Tournament, giving the guidelines for building squadrons to compete in GDW's official tournaments to be held over the next three years; the Campaign Game, instructing players on how to create and fund naval forces through the control of entire planetary budgets; and the Islands Campaign, in which two new subsectors are mapped out and explained, ready for players to choose up sides and begin building their fleets. TRILLION CREDIT SQUADRON also includes a couple of rules inadvertently omitted from the second edition of *High Guard*.

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TCS proves to be a very interesting departure from the average *Traveller* adventure. The examples and clarifications in TCS will make some of the more ambiguous parts of both editions of *High Guard* more accesible to players (though the second edition is necessary to play TCS). The two new subsectors of the Islands Cluster, hidden deep within the Great Rift, will add new arenas for play, even to those who aren't interested in the squadron concept.

There are not many problems evident in TCS. There are a few typos in some of the ship examples and elsewhere, which may give a few bad moments until you figure them out. And the math involved sometimes seems overwhelming – this is one in which a calculator is not only suggested but required!

All in all, if you're looking for guidelines on fleet actions – whether you're into role-playing or not – TRILLION CREDIT SQUADRON is definitely worth buying.

–William A. Barton

WARBOR-PARN (Group One); $6.95. *Traveller* supplement. One 8½" x 11" 18-page book, 17" x 22" full-color map, bagged. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

WARBOR-PARN is yet another in Group One's series of adventure settings on alien worlds, this one a planet still wallowing in the age of dinosaurs, yet with intelligent life. Planetary terrain; descriptions of the various saruian species and of the two reptile-derived intelligent races, the brutish nomad trist, and the smaller, more-advanced bose; encounter tables; and maps and descriptions of three bose cities, the ruins of an ancient alien station and a mysterious monolith make up the gist of this adventure setting, along with a more subdued than usual geodesic planetary map.

The intriguing idea of adventure on a world full of dinosaurs raises WARBOR-PARN above the level of most of the smaller adventure settings in G1's line. Some of the bigger of the saurians listed in the encounter tables could even withstand a few rounds of combat against the highest-tech *Traveller* weapons, though even these will be made short work of by a party armed with a couple of plasma or fusion weapons and several gauss rifles. Anyone who uses this adventure (or anywhere animal encounters are an integral feature) should in some way limit the players' weaponry. It was a welcome surprise to find rules for using the black powder cannons of the bose; too often new weapons in G1 adventures have been left for the referee to devise performance, to-hit rolls, etc.

Aside from the usual G1 adventure flaws, there are a couple of questionable concepts involved in the description of the planet's background. One puzzling item is the question of how the obviously reptilian parnor species evolved with from six to ten limbs while the other species, the bentifry (read tyrannosauri) and the culbertrot, are all four-limbed. The conflicting locations of the bose villages on the map and in the text is a further problem.

You might find a few points of interest in WARBOR-PARN for some suitable – and with some alterations, even exciting – adventure situations.

–William A. Barton

ZISMV: VLEZHDATL (FASA); $7.50. Designed by Jordan Weisman and L. Ross Babcock III. Approved for *Traveller.* One 8½" x 11" booklet, nine 17" x 11" deckplan sheets, bagged. Published 1981.

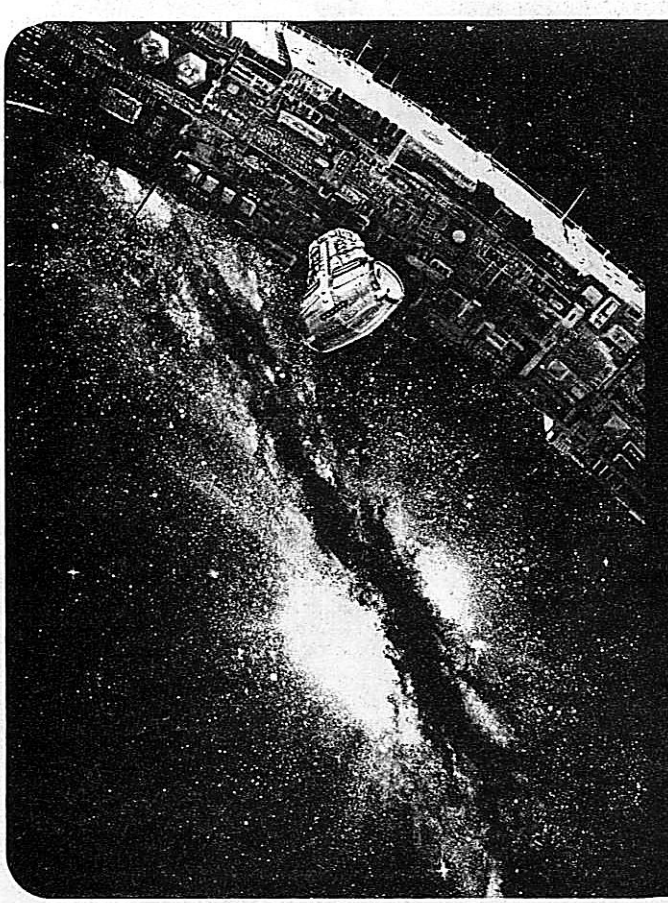
The ZISMV (Zhodani Interstellar Military Vessel): VLEZHDATL is the latest of FASA's series of starship deckplans. The *Vlezhdatl* is a 2000-ton strike cruiser, sort of a Zhodani counterpart to the Imperium's *Kinunir*-class battlecruisers – but much more potent. Sporting a particle accelerator bay, missile launch tubes and fusion turrets, the *Vlezhdatl* would prove a match for most starships in an average *Traveller* campaign. The deckplans are laid out over 9 sheets, showing the various decks and levels of the ship, including the side-mounted missile pods. A profile view shows where each deck or level is located on the ship, plus providing the key to the various deck symbols used. The booklet, displaying a nice illustration of the ship by William Keith, supplies a background of the ship, detailed descriptions of the various decks, crew stations, stats for the *Vlezhdest* fighter carried aboard, and three mini-scenarios by J. Andrew Keith.

The VLEZHDATL is, of course, most notable for the fact that it's the only design yet published – with the exception of the patrol frigate in Games Workshop's *IISS Ship Files* – of a Zhodani ship. Specifically designed for use with the 15mm Martian Metals *Traveller* figures, the plans are perfect for use with boarding actions, the subject of one of the scenarios, in fact. The plans themselves are nicely detailed, as have been most of the FASA ships, even down to recognizable toilets and showerheads.

Most of the problems evident with ZISMV: VLEZHDATL are minor. Some of the console chairs are faded and difficult to see. The pages of the booklet are stapled in somewhat out of alignment. There are some spelling and proofreading errors.

Overall, though, unless you're one who prefers to draw your own plans, you should find the ZISMV: VLEZHDATL of definite use in your campaigns, particularly those taking place against the backdrop of the Fifth Frontier War.

–William A. Barton



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Featured Review:

Wizardry™

by Forrest Johnson

There are five in the party. Ansel and Bertram are fighters, AC2 in their plate mail and shields. Cecil, the priest is fully armored, and sports a +2 mace. Desmond, the thief, has only leather armor and a shortsword, but he expects to spend more time checking for traps than fighting. Eli is a 6th level mage. He is even less eager to fight than Desmond, but his spells have ended the careers of many a vile monster.

The adventurers make it to the third level of the dungeon before running into trouble. Passing through a secret door near the staircase, they blunder into a room with six ghouls. The party is surprised, so the monsters get a free strike. Armor frustrates four of the ghouls, but one strikes Ansel and paralyzes him. Cecil takes five hits, but makes his saving throw.

The loss of Ansel forces Desmond to the front rank for the second round. Fearing for his shabby life, he parries. However, Cecil, the priest, manages to dispel two of the undead creatures. Eli kills three of them with a fireball, and does 12 hits on the fourth. The last, scorched monster hacks futilely at Cecil, and falls to Bertram's blade, Dragon Slayer.

In the chest the ghouls were guarding, Desmond finds a hoard of gold and a strange, glittering amulet . . .

You think this sounds a lot like D&D, and you are right, but the game is WIZARDRY, perhaps the most advanced adventure program on the market.

Characters

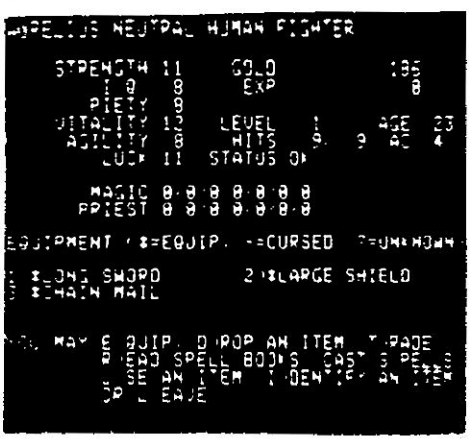
Character generation involves a choice of five races, eight professions and three alignments. Each character has six characteristics – strength, IQ, piety, vitality, agility and luck – each of which has at least an occasional influence on play. Characteristics range in value from 5 to 18. They are determined by allocating points at the beginning of the game; they can change as a character gains levels.

Having created some characters, you exit the "Training Ground" subroutine, and go to "Gilgamesh' Tavern" to assemble your party. Up to six characters can go adventuring at any one time. The order of the party is important because only the first three characters can strike in combat, or be struck at.

Leaving Gilgamesh' place the party goes to "Boltac's Trading Post" to get some equipment. A variety of armor and weaponry is available, and also some simple magic items. Of course, beginning characters don't have enough gold to buy the best equipment.

The Maze

Having equipped themselves, the party proceeds to the nearest underground labyrinth. One is close at hand, on the same disk. It has ten spacious levels. In a month of diligent effort, I have only explored seven of them.



The dungeon graphics are 3D, not quite as neat as *Ultima*, but a bit faster. The party strides through the dungeon, using single keystroke commands to move, fight monsters, and so on.

Monsters are in the dungeon, but not of it. When you encounter a monster, its picture replaces that of the room or corridor; it is not superimposed. Monsters appear out of thin air, and vanish back into it if they flee. They do not have an independent existence; it is not possible to chase them around the dungeon, as in *Ultima*.

There are many kinds of monsters, most of them straight out of the manual. All appear in color. Many have special abilities – to poison, paralyze or turn to stone. For example, you start encountering dragons about the fourth level. Dragons can bite, cast spells or breathe fire; fiery breath puts hits on everyone in the party.

Monsters come in groups of one to eight, and up to four groups can attack at a time. I have never encountered a mass of 32 dragons, but I have had some encounters almost as bad. If you are surprised by a horde of monsters like that, your characters are dead, regardless of their hit points or abilities.

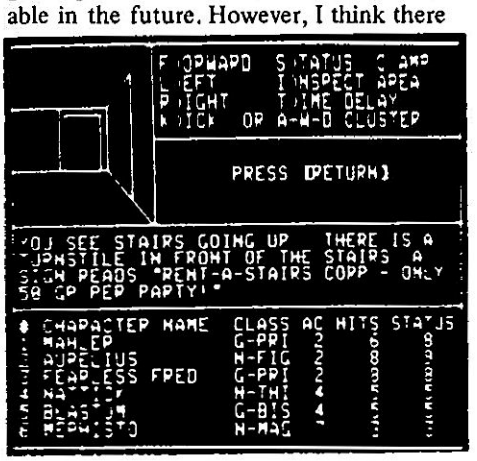
If they kill the monsters, the party collects experience points and gold. Sometimes the latter is in a chest with a trap on it. The thief class of characters exists mostly to detrap chests. (Some people don't bother to take along a thief at all, but they are passing up their chances for the magic items in the chests.)

Having emerged from the dungeon, characters can rest up at "The Adventurer's Inn," or try to resurrect a comrade at "The Temple of Cant."

Program Flaws

WIZARDRY is an excellent simulation . . . of bad D&D. It is practically all hacking and mapping. Strategy is simple. There is little opportunity for puzzle-solving, negotiation or role-playing.

Sir-tech is planning a series of expansion disks, which link together to form a consistent fantasy universe. That sounds great; gamers will have more variety available in the future. However, I think there


FORWARD STATUS CAMP
LEFT INSPECT AREA
RIGHT TIME DELAY
PRESS (RETURN)
YOU SEE STAIRS GOING UP . THERE IS A
STAIRS
SIGN READS "RENT-A-STAIRS CORP - ONLY
50 GP PER PARTY!"
CHARACTER NAME CLASS AC HITS STATUS
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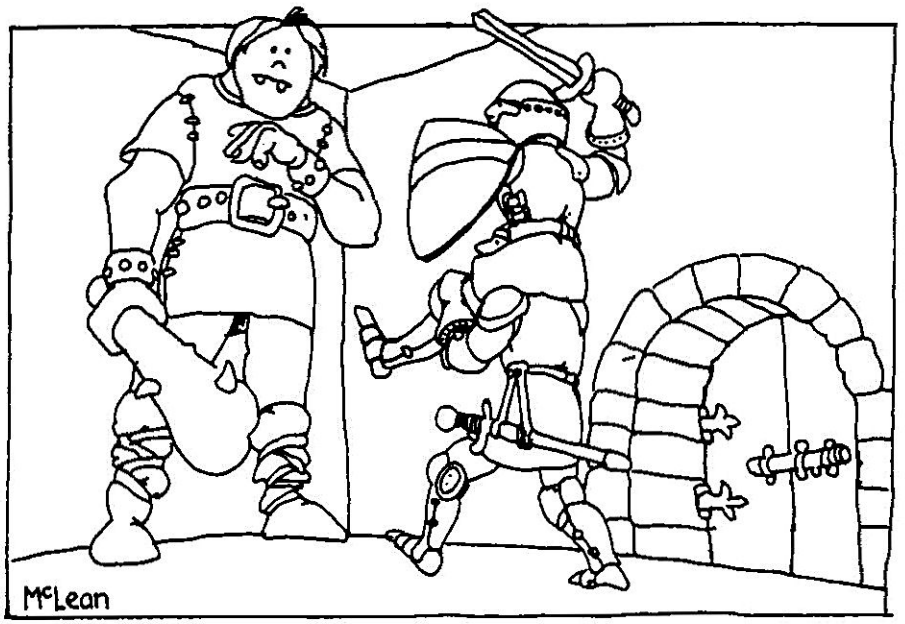
FEARLESS FRED G-PRI 2 8 8
M-THI 4 5
G-BIS 4
M-MAG



are limits inherent in the program. Single key strokes just aren't as flexible as sentence parsing. This game isn't going to take too much business away from Scott Adams.

Also, eye-hand coordination is not a factor. The game is fast, but it won't interest arcade purists.

One can detect a number of small glitches in the program. Thieves, for some reason, cannot use large shields, but they can use +1 large shields. The usually-reliable documentation says that priests can't use helms, but players quickly discover that they can. Also, the careful mapper will find a number of strange, empty spaces on some levels. It's as if the programmer created some rooms and forgot to put in doors. If you get teleported into such a place, you better be able to teleport out. Otherwise, you will have to hit reset. There is a subroutine to recover characters in such an event, but it ages them ten years as a penalty.

That brings me to the worst problem with WIZARDRY. The program tends to crash. This may be a hardware problem – with such a complex program, even a slight misalignment of the disk drive may cause a failure to read. Anyway, the ten-year penalty makes a program crash especially frustrating.

I am told that Sir-tech is working on this problem, and that the next edition of the program will not have the ten-year penalty. Sir-tech also promises to replace disks which are defective, or which become unreadable.

Conclusion

WIZARDRY represents a leap in computer game design. It is certainly the best D&D-style computer game on the market. (Now if only I could get someone to computerize *RuneQuest* . . .)

WIZARDRY (Sir-tech); $49.95. Designed by Andrew Greenberg and Robert Woodhead. 48K disk for the Apple. 1-6 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

UNIVERSE III

UNIVERSE III is a computer-moderated correspondence game in which each player commands a starship entering a new universe to explore, colonize, and conquer new worlds, contending with other players and unknown hazards. Each time you send in a turn, the computer will evaluate it with respect to the current game situation and other players' moves, and send you a printout showing your current status. When you "meet" other players, you can send them messages . . . to trade, negotiate, or intimidate.

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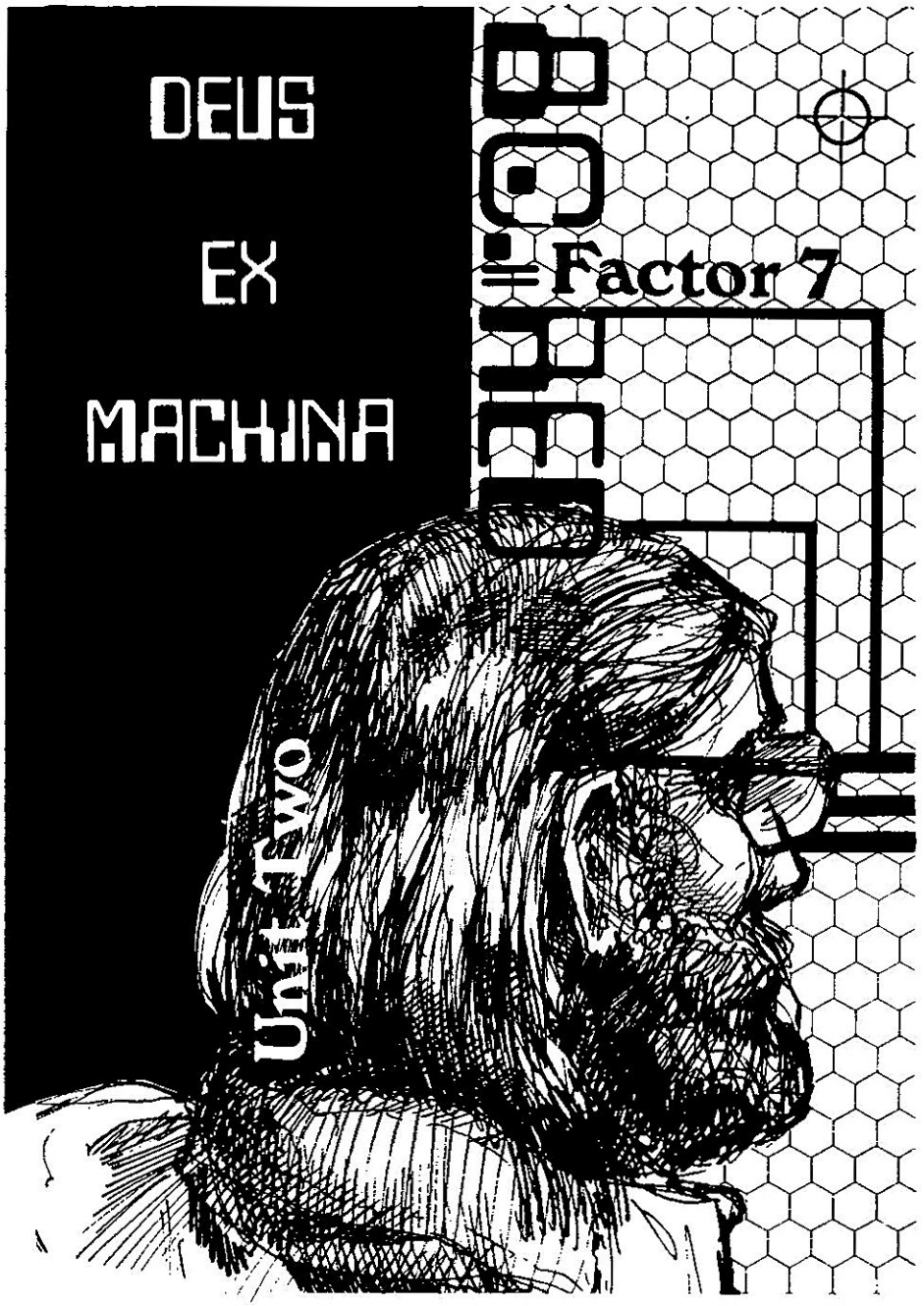

Game in the Computer/ Computer in the Game

by Fred D'Ignazio and Allen L. Wold

The typical computer game contains the whole game in the computer program. As in *Adventure*, that is all there is to it. No matter how intricate the puzzle, how thrilling the graphics, what you run is what you get.

Adventure is an interesting computer game. Yet it is a game that is closed and finite. Everything you need to play is there inside the computer once you run the program. You don't have to add anything to the game except decisions. There is nowhere else to go than Colossal Cave, and nothing to do but solve the puzzles, find the treasures, and get them out.

On the other hand, role-playing games are unique and open-ended. *Dungeons & Dragons*, on which *Adventure* is loosely based, is open and limitless. The players must add a great deal to the game, including maps, characters, objectives, verbal descriptions, and decisions. At the same time, the rules are such that if you want to do something else, you can. You can leave the dungeon, go to a town, have a party, get a job, or whatever.

Yet how many times have you played role-playing games and wished the tables and charts weren't so complicated that most of your time was spent interpreting them? The typical RPG offers lots to do, but the play is impeded by pages of rules, most of which deal with reading and evaluating the numberous tables.

The Programmed DM

Fortunately, a new group of electronic games are searching for a new, middle way between the closed, finite computer games and the open, limitless role-playing games. This new, middle way tries to eliminate the weaknesses and preserve the strengths of these two earlier types of games.

We can see the beginnings of this middle way in games such as Mattel's *Electronic Dungeons & Dragons*, Magnavox's *Quest for the Rings*, Ideal's *The Generals* and Milton Bradley's *Dark Tower*. All these games differ from *Adventure* in that they have a computer embedded in the game, instead of a game embedded in the computer.

But these games are just the beginning. And there is also a problem: The game designers are trying to capture a role-playing game and transfer it to a computerized game piece or game board. The computer is miniature and hidden inside the game. But the computer is still there, and this alters the game. It is no longer open and infinite. As in *Adventure*, it has become finite and closed.

Another middle way that is being explored appears in the *Wizardry* game created by Andrew Greenberg and Robert Woodhead of Sir-Tech Software Inc. *Wizardry* would be a marvelous game even if it were completely finite and closed. Yet it is not. The characters you create and build up during the game can be saved, resaved, replayed, and transferred to new games and new adventures. The characters achieve a life of their own outside of the individual games and outside the finite game program running inside the computer. And the finite adventures described in each program become *episodes* in a larger, grander adventure that (hypothetically, at least) is limitless.

The electronic board games and games such as *Wizardry* represent two extreme but interesting new ways of combining computers with role-playing games. But

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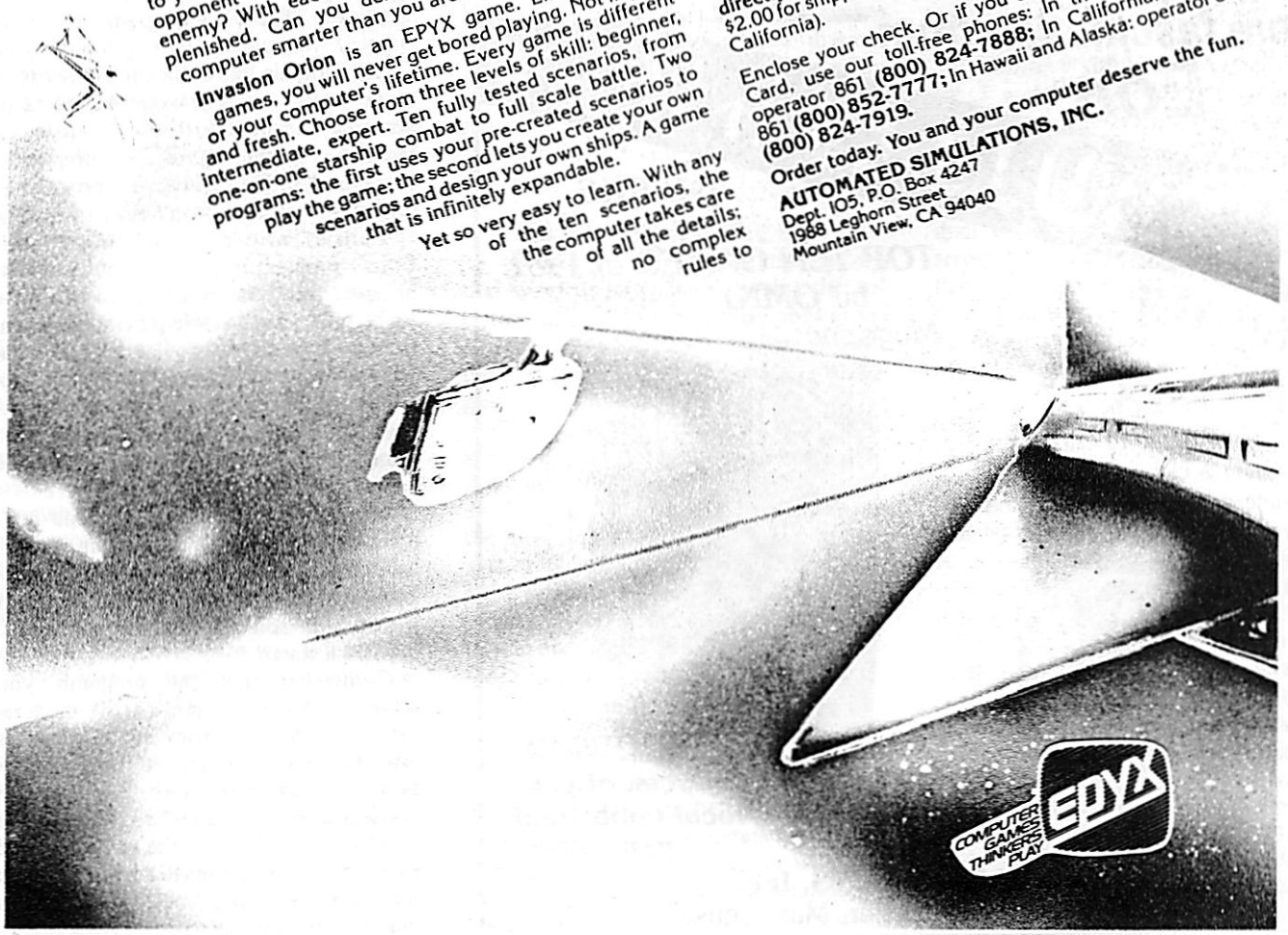

both types of games are produced by professional game designers with considerable technical and financial resources. The methods they employ are out of reach of the average computer hobbyist or role-playing game enthusiast.

The Programmer DM

Yet there is another way – a technique for using computers to aid but not limit an open role-playing game. This way will give the serious game player the advantage of computer-assisted play and the open-ended nature of a role-playing game. And it is a method that can be employed by the average computer hobbyist or role-playing game enthusiast who has access to a microcomputer.

To take this third, "middle" way, we need to divide the role-playing game into two parts. The first part includes the decision-making and piece-moving aspects of the game. The second part includes the comparison of pieces, the reference to tables, and creation of the element of chance in the game.

If there is a board in a particular game, leave the board. A 2-foot-by-3-foot, four-color map board and three-dimensional pieces provide a great amount of visual and tactile satisfaction. The computerized "light" pens and the colorful, animated picture-screen graphics that enhance the newer computer adventure games will soon replace these boards . . . but not yet.

Also, don't take away the human game master and replace him with a computer program – a crude electronic facsimile of an imaginative and crafty human being. The computer can not compare with a good human-moderated game in which the game master has spent days – even weeks – creating an adventure to challenge the game's human players. At his fingertips, the well-prepared game master has gathered stacks of books, hundreds of charts, piles of maps, and heaps of dice.

So keep the game master. But free him from his trivial, distracting chores. Free him from all his scorekeeping and bookkeeping. Put all the tables and charts into the computer. Let *it* roll the dice, check the right columns, modify the rolls, and give the results. The computer will give the answers instantly, the answers will be correct every time, and the game master will be freed from an exacting, tremendously time-consuming chore. He will be free to make the adventure more lively, more inventive, more perilous, and more rewarding for the other players.

How is this computer-assisted role-playing game actually set up and played? It begins days or weeks before the actual game, when the game master writes a set of programs – a world generator, a world reader, and a character generator. Using a world generator program, he can create the fantasy or science-fiction universe he plans to use in the game. Using the world reader, he can save that world on a tape cassette or diskette. And, using the character generator, he can create a rich set of NPCs to populate his game.

When the human players arrive to play the game, they will find the game master armed with only a hex paper map, colored pencils, and his computer. The players may also have maps and pencils. But everyone's rule books, reference books, tables, etc. can either be discarded or significantly reduced. Now the computer manages all these functions.

As a result, the computer has taken all the drudgery out of playing and moderating the game. When the game master needs a new treasure or a new monster, he can get one instantly, at the push of a button. When combat is conducted, the computer can supply the most elaborate conditions, then report the most complex results, instantly. Both the players and the moderator are left with only the game to think about, not its mechanics.

The DM's Program

This sounds like a dream. Yet it has already been done. For example, see Chris Marvel's excellent article, "Traveller in Your Computer" (*Creative Computing*, November, 1981). *[Also, a program is available on disk from FASA – FJ.]*

Chris is an experienced programmer. Chris's program is ambitious and comprehensive. But your program doesn't have to be. If you are a role-playing game enthusiast but only a novice with computers, don't worry. Your tables and programs can be simple at first – mere skeletons or outlines. Later, you can enrich them, add to them, and make them more complex.

We know this is possible. The non-computer half of our own team (Allen) has already put together a primitive program along the lines we outlined above. It is not what could be done by an expert, but it is a start.

Remember that the programs you write don't have to replace the moderator, just *help* him. They supplement his intelligence and memory in the same way as books, tables and dice. But they are much faster and easier for him to use while he is moderating the game. Best of all, when the game master uses them, he can stop worrying about keeping his thumb in the right place.

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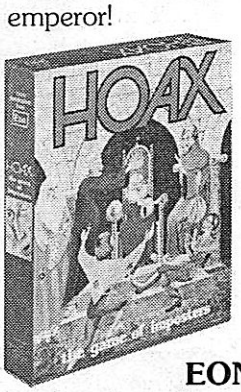

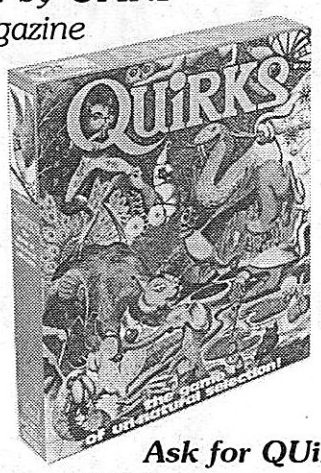

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Flare Star

by William H. & J. Andrew Keith

This folio adventure is designed for characters with a variety of backgrounds serving aboard a Trade Pioneer merchant ship. The referee may draw characters from any source, including existing campaigns; some of the characters should have Vacc Suit skill.

The merchant ship is the Far Trader ***Scotian Huntress****. Details of her statistics, performance, and layout can be found in GDW's Supplement 7,* ***Traders and Gunboats****. Other* ***Traveller*** *books and supplements can be incorporated as desired.*

* * *

Background: Undeveloped sectors along the edge of the Imperium – sectors like Reaver's Deep – are the hunting grounds for the Trade Pioneers. *Scotian Huntress* is one of these, a Type A2 Far Trader owned by the mercantile firm of Caledon Ventures. Manned by an experienced trade team, the ship has been probing along the rim of the Great Rift, searching out new markets, resources, and products that might put Caledon ahead of the competition.

Unexplored star systems always promise untold wealth. But the system the traders were exploring now – shrivelled chunks of rock and ice circling twin M5 dwarfs – had shown the other side of the balance sheet. There was nothing of value here.

Until they detected the Other . . .

The alien craft was unlike any seen before – huge, with enormous heat radiator wings, falling in an eccentric orbit around the red suns. Aboard the *Huntress*, excitement ran high. New-found races meant whole new worlds of trade opportunity, and a fat bonus from Caledon. In moments, the traders had matched course and speed with the newcomer. But, as they approached, they realized that there was no sign of life from the alien and only the faintest traces of power leakage or heat spill. Their prize was a dead ship.

But even a derelict must come from someplace. The Trade Pioneer's contact team suited up to have a closer look. An airlock was visible at the bow. Within might be the clues that would lead them to a new world, new people, and bonanza.

Gaining Entrance: A 3-meter wide panel at the derelict's bow is the only obvious entrance. No controls are visible, but a 5-centimeter square recessed niche will invite investigation. Nothing the adventurers do to this niche will have any effect. Characters who carefully examine the hull around the panel can, on a 2-die throw of their intelligence or less, discover a hidden manual release.

Operating the release will make the panel slide open very slowly. The outer door will close and the inner door open automatically once the adventurers enter the airlock. The inner door will operate in fits and jerks, freezing open, and a faint blue light on one bulkhead will flicker twice and die. The party will find that nothing they do, and nothing attempted by those still aboard *Huntress*, will make the airlock operate again. They are trapped, although there seems to be no immediate danger.

Conditions Aboard: There is no gravity or light and, except for the battery that spent its last power working the airlock, there are no operating power systems aboard. There is atmosphere present, but the interior temperature is -150 degrees C.

Of immediate interest will be the bodies floating everywhere, well preserved in the cold and all showing signs of violent death. They are of no species known to the adventurers. Each is 1.1 meters tall, with tubular bodies, two stalked eyes, eight grasping appendages and four heavier legs. None wears clothes; some carry lengths of metal tubing, broken equipment, or other improvised weapons.

The Ship: As the adventurers explore the ship, the referee should refer to this section to identify various compartments and describe them to the players.

All corridors are 3 meters wide and 2 high. Doorways are 3 meters wide and only 1 meter high; mechanical releases .5 meter off the deck will open all the doors except two. These exceptions are the frozen inner airlock panel and a door leading aft to what may be engineering spaces; no mechanical releases are present, but 5-centimeter square recessed spaces are visible next to them. Debris floats everywhere – broken equipment, smashed instruments, and vandalized fixtures – and occasionally the party will encounter what seem to be tube-shaped, cartilaginous bones among the alien bodies.

The following areas are keyed to the alien ship deckplans.

1. *Airlock.*

2. *Control Room:* Instrument panels are .5 meter tall, covered with switches, plungers, and other controls. Any character with computer skill will soon notice that there is nothing resembling a computer anywhere. "Furniture" seems to be shallow circular depressions, 1.5 meters across, .5 meter deep, lined with some flexible material and sunken into the deck. Considerable damage has been done to the instrument panels, though one, set off by itself and bearing only a violet plunger, appears unharmed. Any character who experiments with this will find that pulling the plunger out will restore gravity (.95 G) and light (extremely harsh, blue-white light from overhead panels) throughout the ship. When gravity is restored, each character must roll two dice against his dexterity to avoid 1D damage.

3. *Quarters:* Eight rooms, each with a single deck depression. The walls are covered by the remnants of intricately designed hangings of glass beads in shades of green, blue, and violet, interspersed with black. The door to one room (marked A) has been deliberately jammed shut from the outside by a piece of pipe in the release mechanism. Within are 10 alien bodies and a number of disjointed cartilaginous bones.

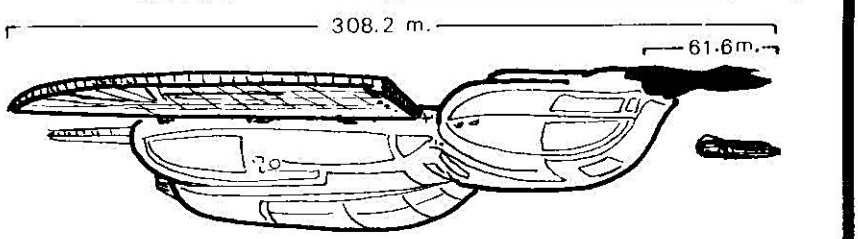
Including these 10 bodies, 60 alien corpses will be found aboard the ship; the referee should divide this number among the various compartments. Unnumbered compartments are of unknown purpose; the combination of alien design and wanton destruction leaves no clues to what they were for. Nearly every compartment has meter-high panels of silvery metal, many half-covered by alien inscriptions, along the walls. These notations can be wiped off easily.

Artifacts: Among the other junk, the party will notice what look like bracelets of some slick, silvery material, 4 centimeters in diameter and 5 centimeters wide. A 5 cm x 5 cm raised ornamental design on the band will on close inspection prove to be an intricate assembly of metal plates and electronic components. Six will be discovered, one in the cabin that was jammed shut. All will be found among or near scattered bones, and all will be broken to some degree.

The Adventure: Shortly after the party boards the derelict, crew members aboard *Huntress* will detect a massive cloud of hydrogen gas – part of the firefall between the two stars – falling toward the nearer sun. Computer predictions estimate that the cloud's impact on the photosphere will trigger a flare within 30 minutes.

Many red dwarfs are flare stars, subject to periodic upheavals that can increase their luminosity by a factor of 100 and flood nearby space with particulate radiation. The two ships are only 13 million kilometers from the double sun, close enough that each is just as bright as, and four times larger than, the sun seen from earth. The immediate increase in brightness will present no danger to characters within the ships. Personnel caught outside will be subject to 1D hits every 10 minutes, unless they are in the shadow of one of the ships.

Four hours after the light of the flare reaches the ship, particulate radiation will arrive. Screens aboard the *Huntress* will protect those aboard her, but the alien ship has no such protection. Adventurers aboard the derelict will suffer 2D hits every 10 minutes until they return to *Huntress*. Radio communication will be impossible, though the characters can talk by touching helmets. The flare will last for 20 hours.



External diagram of alien vessel. Explored section shown in black. A2 Far Trader shown for scale.

The Lifeboat: On the port side forward the party will find a series of mechanically dogged hatches, the last jammed shut from the far side. It may be freed by applying 20 strength points to it, giving access to the ship's lifeboat.

Power is off within the boat. A violet plunger like the one in the control room is in the "on" position, but the boat's batteries have long since been drained. There is no way to restore light or gravity, or to cast off from the larger vessel.

Two bodies are aboard, much different from those found on the large ship. These are about 1.5 meters across, furry, and disc-shaped, with 12 appendages of various sizes arranged around a fleshy hub. There are no legs on the ventral surface; the creature may glide or undulate along the ground.

Each wears on one arm a bracelet identical to the broken ones outside. Strangely fashioned hand lasers float nearby; both aliens have burn wounds, and one appears to have shot itself.

The adventurers are trapped aboard the derelict with only a short time to make a thorough and rapid exploration of the alien vessel, discover a way out, and get back to the safety of *Huntress*. Along the way, they may gather clues concerning the identity and origin of the derelict's crew.

The Puzzles: A number of puzzles are presented to the adventurers. Most important, they must discover that the intact bracelets within the lifeboat will fit into and operate the 5-cm square niche by the airlock. If the ship's power is on, the airlock will function smoothly and the party can escape. (The mechanism of the rear hatch appears to be broken. No amount of tinkering will open it.)

A number of conclusions can be drawn once exploration of the derelict is complete. The players should be encouraged to develop their own conclusions from the clues they discover. These include:

1. Two kinds of lifeforms were aboard the ship, which was designed for the disc-shaped beings. The ship probably carried a crew of eight.

2. No computers were found on board. The alien notations on the silvery boards may represent manual calculations. If this is true, an enormous potential market may be available once this race is discovered and contacted.

3. The ship, based on external inspection, is not jump capable. It has a sublight grav drive of primitive design.

4. The harsh, ultraviolet-loaded light of the alien's lighting panels suggest a home star of around spectral class A0. Querying the *Huntress*'s navigational computer will reveal a A0 star two parsecs deeper into the Great Rift. Since such stars rarely have planets, it has never been visited. Caledon will pay a bonus of 250,000 CR for this information.

Referee's Information: The following material is for the referee *only*. It will form the basis for future adventures in this campaign.

Though A0 stars rarely have planets, there are always exceptions, and the disc-shaped aliens come from a Tech 9 civilization on one of these. Clues aboard the derelict suggest that they see blue and ultraviolet light. Their ship passed the twin stars too close at the wrong time and a flare similar to the one that threatened the adventurers disabled their heat radiators and crippled their ship.

The starship builders are extremely long-lived. Later studies will show that the ship (designed to carry 100,000 tons of fuel, with a 100:1 fuel/mass ratio) was capable of reaching .02 light. At that speed, the trip from the nearby A0 star took 325 years.

Computers were unknown among the starship builders. They rely instead on individuals with "lightning calculator" talent – somewhat more common among them than in humans – as organic computers. There will be a planet-sized market for electronic computers if the home planet can be discovered.

The presence of TWO alien species aboard the alien craft is the key to an important secret, one which will unfold in the months ahead as *The Space Gamer* carries additional adventures from this campaign.

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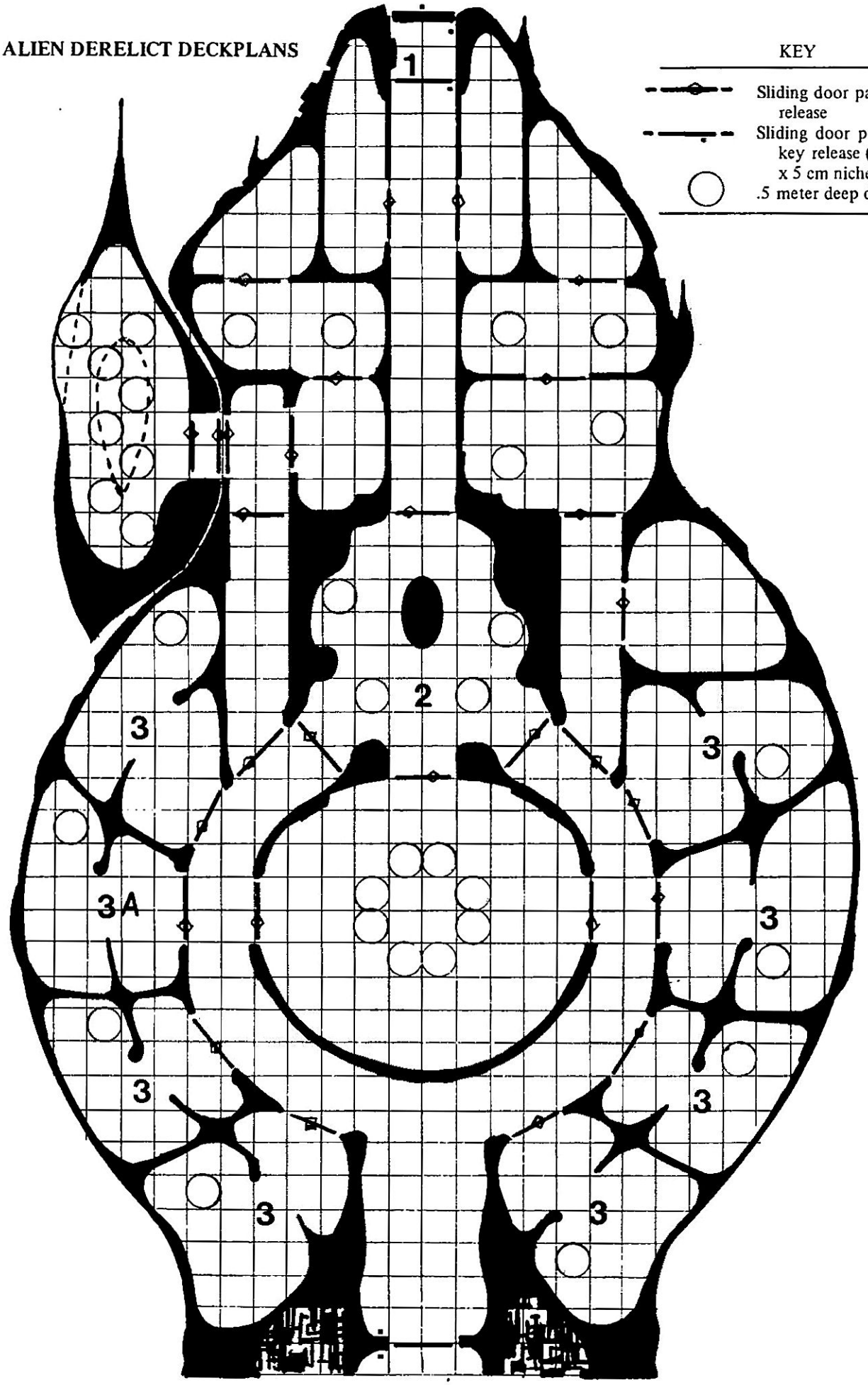
ALIEN DERELICT DECKPLANS



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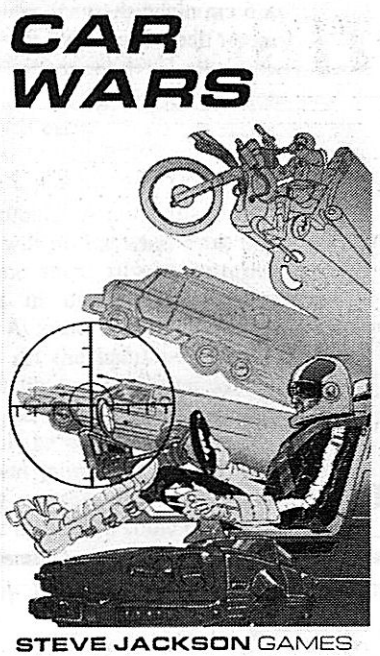

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THE FBI AFFAIR:

Killer Loose in Scottsdale

by Michael Stackpole

The material herein is classified. Information release must be approved after the filing of IRF 17459-ASP with the proper departmental authorities.

It was the most vicious pack of killers ever assembled in one place. Most of them were as disoriented as I was, plucked from the normal life of cloak and dagger to be thrown into some mad dwarf's idea of a game. All of us watched the short, chubby blond man who called himself the Master as he explained why he had gathered together this circle of killers.

"The ten of you are the most skillful terminators in the world at this time. Each sees himself as best, the champion. I have gathered you to find out who, indeed, is the supreme killer. Beginning at 6 AM tomorrow and lasting until 6 PM two days hence, 60 hours total, you will debate the matter. The debate will not be so much a matter of words, as of weapons, poisons and explosives. The survivor wins."

I reviewed in my mind what I knew about each of the others. Next to me was a major in the KGB, code named Ursus. His skill was well known. Beside him, looking regal, was the MI6 killer, Lord. Next sat the curly-haired, well-muscled free agent called Shootist by those in the know. He had often plotted grand endings for his victims, but always fell back upon his trusty pistol. Speaking to him was a streetwise punk called the Kid, though never to his face. The insidious half-breed, Wangson, was lean and tricky. He seemed to be hitting it off with the agent known as Lady, who was beautiful, and as deadly as a black widow. Two other killers seemed to know each other. One I knew as Ninja (a master of ninjitsu, the art of not being seen). The other was the attractive and intelligent mastermind known in hushed whispers as Thinker because she'd invented so many different ways of killing. It was said that her targets never died bored. The last agent, Dancer, sat alone in the corner and giggled madly.

And me, well, I've killed a few in my own right.

This Master character passed out the assignments and all of the agents split off to their rooms. We had been given cover identities while in Phoenix; it was amusing to find that six of us had been given the cover of working for some game company. The off-limits areas, places that tended to watched by cops, were outlined in our assignment packets. All of us began to plan.

The Safe House

Lord, Ursus and I were assigned to stay in the same house. We quickly agreed to share our targets' identities and make our house "safe." Lord said he was after Thinker. The KGB agent named the Kid as his hit. I looked hard at the Russian, saying, "Tovaritch, you are mine."

Lord seemed amused and Ursus seemed upset. "No need to worry, this house is safe. You just watch for my killer and pick him off. If nothing else you'll pick up some good Karma." I sincerely meant what I said; Ursus had worked with Wangson before and I was afraid that the wily Oriental would be my death. Ursus could kill him if Ursus could stand the idea of his assassin living in the same house.

"I trust you," he said, "but were the situations reversed, you would have no reason to trust me." He turned and retired to his room. Lord did the same.

I woke the next morning about 5:30 AM. I secreted a pistol in a makeshift shoulder holster and scouted the house. There was nothing unusual, so I fixed some breakfast and retreated to my

room, a safe area unless I invited someone in. If no one was in a room, it was considered fair game.

About 9 AM the Russian left his room for his cover job at a bookstore. I watched through a grating as he carefully closed his door. I assumed he had booby-trapped his own room. I'd done lots of thinking about his remark the night before, and a booby-trap would prove that he didn't trust me.

I got up when I heard him leave the house and watched as he left the parking lot. He stopped his car and began to fiddle around with the car assigned to Shootist. If his target was the Kid, rigging Shootist's car was a sloppy way of hitting his target, despite the fact that those two were rooming together. There was no guarantee that blowing up Shootist's car would get the Kid.

I returned to my room and grabbed an old 35mm film cannister. It was home to my pet black widow, Lucretia. I inched open the Russian's door, checking for tripwires or other things attached to the door. There was nothing, so I left Lucretia next to the light switch. I noted that the Russian had covered it with contact poison, so I avoided touching it.

"Stay away from the green stuff, girl. Get the Russian."

First Blood

About an hour later, Lord presented himself for breakfast. As he ate, having declined my offer to make his breakfast, I turned on the radio. The news reported upon two strange murders and we paid

close attention. The first victim was Lady; she had been suffocated. The coroner fixed her time of death at 6:05 AM. We instantly knew the Oriental had killed her, and was now after her target. The second murder report indicated that the Kid had been found dead. He had been shot twice and was lying next to a bomb that had been tripped but had failed to go off.

Lord and I reached the same conclusion. "Shootist killed the Kid. The bomb he had set proves that it wasn't a self-defense shooting which means that the Kid was his target. The damned Russian lied. He was assigned to kill Shootist!" I was angry.

"Quite. I think the Rangoon ceiling bomb should unstick his wicket."

"Rangoon? I thought it was called the Siam ceiling bomb."

"It was until I modified it with a wire which is virtually invisible," the Briton announced proudly. I prepared the bomb as Lord reopened the Russian's room. I warned him about Lucretia and the light switch; he studiously avoided both traps. He disassembled an air conditioning vent above the door while I bound two sticks of TNT together and gingerly set a percussion cap in the end of each stick. The fine line was tied to the bomb and then attached to the back of the door. Opening the door would pull the bomb from the vent and it would explode as it hit the floor or door.

Lord decided to remain in the house and work on his book, his cover being that of a writer on vacation. I left for work and was relieved to find no sign of the others also assigned to the game company. I entered the offices and immediately checked the mailbox given me under my cover name. A hastily constructed bomb had been placed there. I quickly disarmed it.

As I laughed nervously, about the bomb, Dancer entered the hallway. We both froze, then I said, "Don't worry, I'm not after you. I know that you aren't after me; this bomb proves it." Already knowing part of the circle of death, I decided to gamble. "I know who's after me, and who Ursus and Lord are after. I've no need to worry about you."

He giggled and looked smug. "What if I'm helping Wangson?"

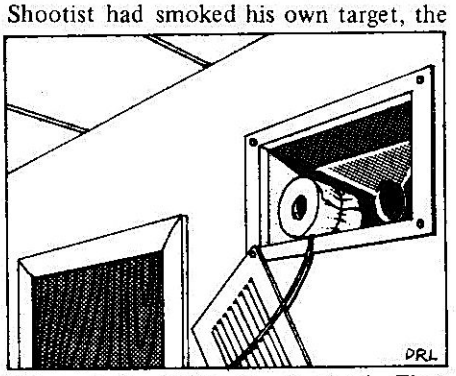
That was the confirmation I needed. I had assumed that Wangson had set the bomb; one of the components in its construction had given me a clue. "Then you've not helped him by telling me that he's my hunter."

Terror shot through Dancer's eyes. It was not a nice thing to cross Wangson. It bothered me too. I was worse off than Dancer. I had to shake Wangson or die.

My job at Flying Buffalo was to write a review column for a magazine. I returned to the productions area (safe for those assigned to work in it) and began to type. Thinker came into the office to work and we began to discuss the circle. We decided to pool our information and try to figure out who was after whom.

Another radio news report interrupted our conversation. It told of a door-to-door salesman being told that the man "next-door" wanted some Super-Scrubber brushes. The curly-haired neighbor accompanied the salesman to the door to introduce him to the person in the house. When Lord opened the door, Shootist stepped from behind the salesman and shot the MI6 agent dead.

Armed with this new information we reconstructed the circle. Lord had been after Thinker. Her target was Ninja; she lamented that he was using his talent to stay out of sight. Ninja was assigned to kill Dancer, and Dancer was after Wangson. Wangson had killed his target, Lady, and had inherited her target, me. I was after the Russian and he was after Shootist. Shootist had smoked his own target, the



Kid, and the Kid's target, Lord. That meant that Shootist was now after Thinker.

An hour later the 4 o'clock news shrunk the circle again. Shootist had been shot in the act of setting bombs. His killer had been identified as a lean man with an oriental cast to his features. I could easily imagine Wangson offering to help him with the bombs and then killing him. That meant Ursus was now after Thinker.

A Matter Of Timing

Thinker and I agreed to go to dinner with the art director for the game company. We thought we left unseen, but a minion of Wangson called him and reported our departure. Only the fact that the minion assumed that we were headed directly back to the house saved our lives.

As we ate Chinese food, curiously enough, Wangson and a horde of minions were rigging my porch with a time bomb. To insure success, the Oriental scattered his lackeys around with guns to relieve the suffering of anyone who survived the blast.

The bomb had been set to explode after a half an hour, the time it should have taken us to return from Flying Buffalo. With us stopping at the restaurant, the bomb exploded prematurely, attracting the fire department and a crowd. I drove into the garage, noticing the hole in the porch next to the driveway. A fireman said that a gas main had blown, but across the crowd I could see Wangson glowering.

"Punctuality is the mark of a gentleman," he called to me.

"Routine is the mark of a dead man," I answered. I skirted the hole in the porch and entered the house. As I entered the hall, a bullet went past my ear.

Torn and bloody, the Russian was smashed against the wall opposite his door. The pistol slipped from his trembling fingers. Had help, the help that was outside investigating the gas main explosion, gotten to him, he might have survived our trap.

"I knew it was there, friend. I knew Lord would want to use the Siam ceiling bomb. I was disarming it when the blast went off outside and it fell."

I nodded solemnly. "Why'd you lie?"

He smiled weakly, fading fast. "I didn't trust you or Lord. Too long in the KGB." A violent shudder wracked his frame and he died.

Now I knew that I was safe inside my own house. I constantly carried two guns, on edge at all times. I knew that an assault by Wangson and his minions could come at any time. I was determined to be ready.

Then, at 10 PM, I got a call from Thinker. She had managed to infiltrate one of Wangson's organizational meetings. As he ranted about lack of guts in the other killers, she blew him apart with a sawed-off shotgun. I loosed a great sigh of relief.

The circle had, in fourteen hours, become very small. Thinker was still after the Ninja. Ninja, still unseen, was after Dancer and Dancer was now after me. The Russian's death forced me into hunting Thinker. None of us had any illusions about being alive in forty-six hours.

The next day was very quiet until a 5 o'clock news flash. Ninja had been found dead in a warehouse. Thinker and I instantly recognized the warehouse as the one where Dancer was supposed to be working. Ninja, unarmed, had been shot by someone who had been waiting for him.

That evening was uneventful, and it looked as though Thinker, Dancer and I

would survive to the deadline. If we all did survive there would be a three-way shootout. I wasn't looking forward to it.

Final Play

At the game company, Thinker and I discussed the problem of Dancer. "One of us is going to die getting him," I said.

"If we both go into the warehouse, one of us as bait, I bet we can lure him out and expose him to the other's fire."

"How do we choose the bait?"

She fished a coin from her purse. "Call it."

I called heads and won.

Suddenly Thinker had an idea. "I know where he lives. I've got some incendiary tape here," she said, holding up what looked to me like red crepe paper. "We can run this around his house and in fifteen minutes it'll burn down."

"Great, let's go!"

As we stood to leave, Dancer capered into the office with a gun. His arm was hideously swollen. I instantly drew and fired six shots. Five of them hit and he danced a pirouette of death into a chair at the back of the office.

Thinker crossed to his body. "My scorpion would have killed him; you needn't have wasted the bullets."

She didn't notice I had drugged her open soda while she checked Dancer. The drug dulled her ability to resist orders. I commanded her to leave the building and sit in the parking lot. Then I gently swathed her with the fire crepe. Good stuff, that. I'll have to find out where she got it.

And then there was one, for the time being anyway. There will always be those who come gunning for the best. I'll be ready.

Observers of the intelligence community believe that the vicious killer who works under the alias Michael Stackpole spends his off-duty hours as a game designer for Flying Buffalo, Inc., and as a columnist for Sorcerer's Apprentice magazine.

TSG BACK ISSUES

No. 15. Wizard and Olympica designer intros; Robotics in Traveller; Floating Hulks; Ogre Update; Orcs and their Weapons; computer gaming.

No. 16. WarpWar article; Classics Simulated in Melee; Alpha Omega; Demons! (Moties in Melee); 1977 game survey results – and a LOT of reviews.

No. 17. GEV designer's intro; strategy for Chitin: I; variants for Imperium, Melee, and a combination Ogre/Rivets variant; WarpWar fiction.

No. 18. IceWar designer's intro; variant scenarios for Invasion: America and War of the Ring; additional equipment for Traveller; mounted Melee; "Referee, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM technique).

No. 19. POND WAR; variant units and scenarios for GEV; combining Imperium and WarpWar; Battlefleet Mars variant; reviews of Swords & Sorcery, Runequest, and Raumkrieg; MicroGame design article.

No. 20. Olympica tactics; Psionics in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRS; Reality in Melee; designer's optional rules for Ice War; designer's article on Starships & Spacemen; "Rip-Off Blues" (wargaming frauds).

No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a MicroGame tournament; tactics for Ogre and GEV; spaceship miniatures; Black Hole variant rules, putting the Deryni into Melee; more reviews.

No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion of the Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre;" variants for Chitin: I, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios; also – strategy in Rivets; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

No. 26. Oneworld designer's intro; tactics in GEV; variations on Wizard; computers in wargaming; Life-sized Melee; and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

No. 27. Hot Spot's designer's intro; Time Travel; Nuke the Air Eaters (gaming atomic war); Weapons for Hobbits in TFT; Muskets in TFT; Game Design Part 1; 5 pages of game reviews.

No. 28. 1979 Game Survey results; Overmen in TFT; A Guide to SF/Fantasy Game Publishers; Task Force Games report; Writers' and Artists' guides; 7 pages of reviews; Game Design Part 2; Deus Ex Machina.

No. 29. Fantasy Trip designer's intro; Painting Fantasy Miniatures; Fantasy and SF game magazines surveyed; Game Design Part 3; more Deus Ex Machina; 7 pages of reviews.

No. 30. KUNG FU 2100; Painting Fantasy Miniatures Part II; Index to Game Articles; Game Design Part 4; Programmable Calculators; 10 pages of reviews.

No. 31. "Sam Beowulf"; 1980 Game Software survey; Game Design Part 5; Random Maze Generation; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 32. Traveller issue: Alternate Character Types, reviews of play aids, scenarios, and variants; also Game Design Part 6; Deus Ex Machina; "Minus Two Reaction;" software survey update; Yaquinto Games report; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 33. Play-by-mail issue: Feature reviews of four PBM games, a Warp War Campaign, Survey of PBM companies; also, Contest Report; Company Report from Schubel and Son; "End Game;" GEV scenario; Game Design Part 7; Deus Ex Machina; The Good Guys, Part I; and 10 pages of reviews.

No. 34. Miniatures issue: Cardboard Heroes Designer's Notes, LOTR Miniatures, Painting Fantasy Miniatures Advanced Techniques, Survey of miniatures manufacturers; also "The Challenge;" Artifact Designer's Notes and Expansion Rules; 3-D Displays II; Game Design Part 8; Wish Contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

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No. 41. D&D issue: Tips for Thieves, Alternate Races for D&D, DM Don'ts, (Your Name) and the Holy Grail; also Tips for TFT Players; more Non-humans contest winners; Game Design (last of the series); Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 42. Star Trek issue: Designer's Notes, Official Errata, Star Fleet Battle Manual reviewed, programming dialog in Trek computer games; also Metamorphosis Alpha Notebook; glossary of game terms – and what they really mean; combined arms in D&D; more nonhuman races; GEV contest winners; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 43. Origins Report; Expanded Combat for Traveller; Designer's Notes for Swordthrust; Diplomacy Variants; More Killer; "Sword's Man" by Timothy Zahn; Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 44. Special feature: AFVs in Traveller; Beware the Uranium Dragon; Fantasy Demography; another scenario for Killer; Featured review of Universe; Deus Ex Machina; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 45. Computer issue: Automated Simulations company report, Play-by-Phone computer gaming; also winning strategies for StarWeb; Designer's Notes for Grimtooth's Traps and Car Wars; reviews of Robot War and Nebula 19; Glossary contest results; Murphy's Rules; and 11 pages of reviews.

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KILLER

A number of truly evil weapons and devices have been sent in by our readers. Herewith, a sampling of the nastiest!

Toilet tank poison (Class A). A large amount of food coloring (green is best) is placed in the TANK of a toilet. When the toilet is flushed, the dye (representing a highly volatile poison) fills the bowl, killing the user. Comments: This was suggested by Stefan Jones, of Locust Valley, NY. I seem to remember reading something similar in a Spider Robinson story once. Only drawback I see is that the dye might leak into the bowl over a period of time, warning the victim.

Poison candle (Class A). A "poison" note is pinned to the bottom of an ordinary candle. If the note is found before the candle is lit, no harm is done. If the candle is lit, though, the person who lit it is dead. If it remains lit for more than five minutes, everyone in the room is dead, and so is anyone who enters the room while the candle is burning (unless they hold their breath).

Candle bomb (Class A). Same general idea, except the candle has a "bomb" note on its bottom, and must be big enough to hide the size bomb desired. The victim is literally lighting the fuse when he lights the candle; the bomb goes off instantly, doing damage appropriate to its size. Comments: Anyone who lights a giant-sized candle while playing KILLER deserves whatever he gets.

Smoke detector (Class A). A small commercial smoke detector can be used as a bomb in two ways. First, you may simply arrange a mechanical linkage to trigger it when (for instance) something is moved. The shrill sound of the alarm will not only inform your victim that he's dead, but send him right up the wall, as well. It would be only common courtesy to attach a little note to the bomb, explaining how to turn it off.

Much more elegant is the use of a smoke detector to blow up a smoker. Simply place the device over the smoker's desk – right above an ashtray is best – and wait. Obviously, some attempt at concealment is a good idea. If all goes well, the smoker will provide the smoke, the detector will perform its intended function, and you will have gotten your man.

Powder bomb (Class B). This nasty device is built as follows:

(1) Take a single layer of tissue paper, fill the center with talcum or baby powder (or confetti or glitter), fold into a rectangle and tape shut.

(2) Place a rectangle of tape on the bottom of the powder packet, leaving about half an inch around all edges.

(3) Tape one end of a thread to this inside rectangle.

(4) Tape the packet to the doorjamb over the door with the tape-rectangle side down, and the end with the thread attached AWAY from the doorknob.

(5) Run the thread through a screw eye in the corner of the doorjamb above the knob. Fasten the free end of the thread to the doorknob. Leave about a foot of slack. This will allow you to leave through the door (carefully) and makes it likelier that your victim will be in position when the packet bursts.

When the door is opened, the thread will pull on the tape rectangle and rip it loose from the rest of the packet, dumping the contents on your victim.

Comments: This was developed by Douglas R. Pearson, of Lincoln, NE. It's Class B because a faceful of powder (or anything else) can be somewhat irritating. For best results, use inconspicuously colored thread and tape. Tape all connections securely. A decoy trap (such as contact poison on the doorknob) will occupy your victim's attention at the critical moment.

Good-Bye, Tulsa

We are reliably informed that the city of Tulsa no longer exists, having been destroyed by a KILLER game earlier this fall. A science fiction convention there featured a three-team version of the "Bomb Builders" scenario. The nuke-building terrorists were opposed by *two* other teams, representing, respectively, Tulsa police and the CIA. Unfortunately for the city of Tulsa, the Game Masters decreed that the police and CIA men did *not* know each others' identities. Not only were they unable to co-operate – they repeatedly blew each others' men away thinking they had caught the terrorists! In the end, the terrorists won. They had assembled their bomb under the convention's main registration desk (extra points for nerve!) and it went off right on schedule. So it goes . . .

Next month: Winners of the futuristic-weapons contest.

–Steve Jackson

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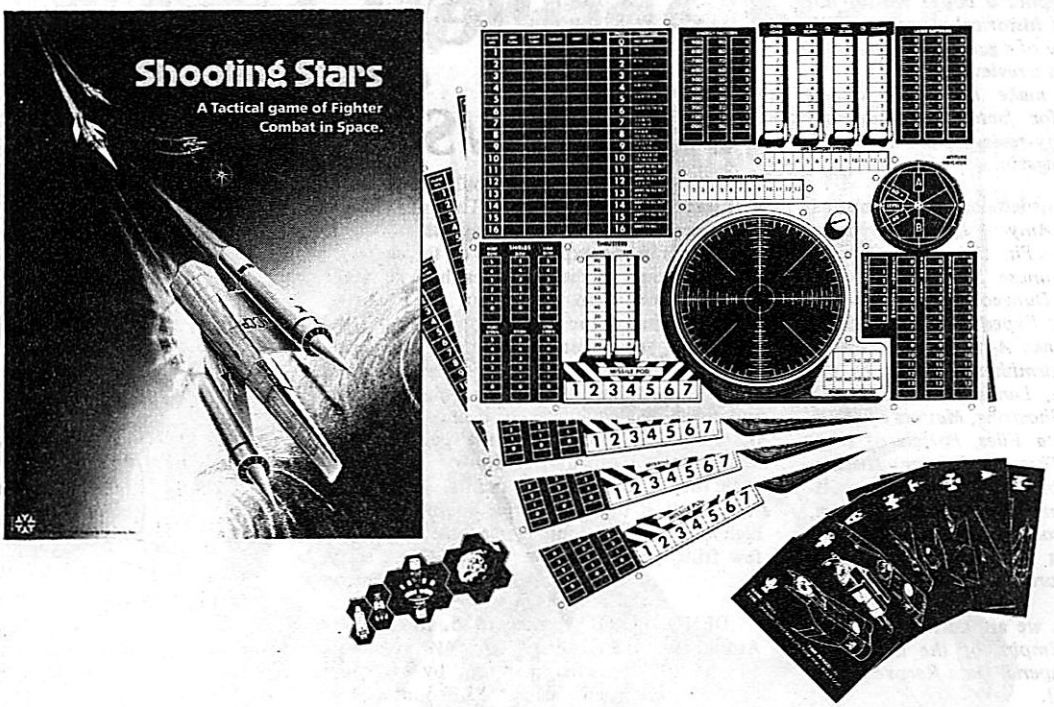

A Tactical game of Fighter Combat in Space.

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- Vector Movement

Components: The boxed game components include a 21½" by 27½" mapboard, a sheet of die cut unit counters, game table cards, Ship Specification Cards for the major crafts used in the game, Ship Control Console Cards, a complete rule book with scenarios, two dice and a sturdy plastic tray.

Scale: 100 Kilometers per hex, 5-10 seconds per Turn, individual ships.

Number of Players: Two to Four

Average Playing Time: Thirty minutes to three hours depending on scenario.

Shooting Stars is a tactical level game of fighter vs. fighter combat beginning in the near future. Scenarios range from the first U.S.-Soviet Space War, to Asteroid Pirates, to Alien invaders. The unique movement system gives the feel of piloting a one man craft in space while at the same time providing a fast paced, smooth flowing game. The Advanced Game and Optional Rules allow for Energy usage in fifteen areas of ship's functions and provide a myriad of special weapons. Scenarios range from Solitaire scenarios such as battling an unmanned outpost, destroying "Rebel Blockade runners" and protecting an Orbital Depot from "Asteroid Pirates" to multi player situations where a group of fighters attack a space station. Ship Specification cards provide information for eight different types of fighter craft, while the scenarios provide the information for space stations, larger craft, the movement of Asteroids, fighting in the gravity influence of a Black Hole and much, much more.

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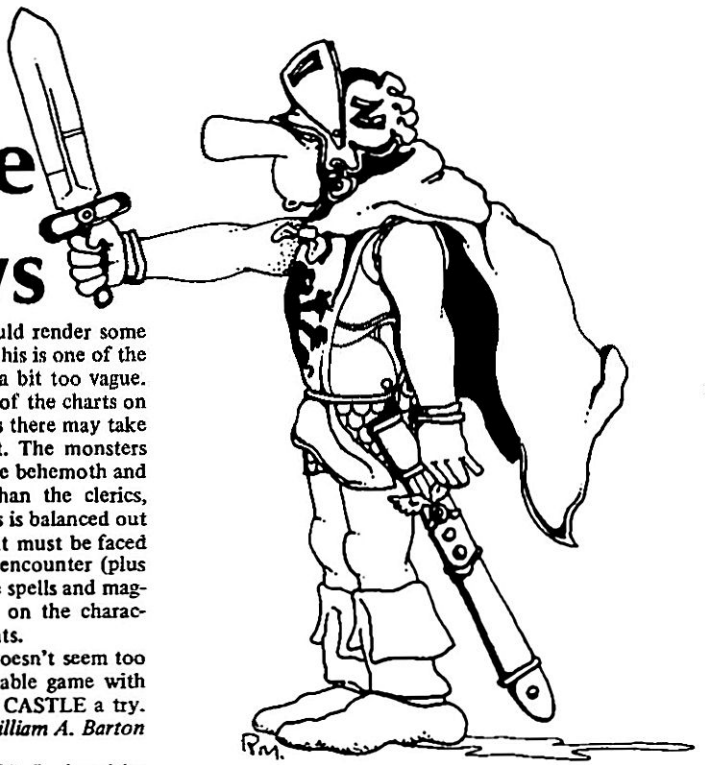
Capsule Reviews



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The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games for which reviews have been assigned or received include: *Amycus Probe, Barbarian Prince, The Burgundy Pit, Chivalry & Sorcery Sourcebook 2, Deathmaze 5000, The Dragon Tree Spell Book, The Dungeon Trap Handbook, Enchanted Treasures, Expedition to Zhodane, Fleetwatch, The Human Adventure, IISS Ship Files, Interstellar Skirmishes, Journey to the Center of the Circle, Lara's Tower, Lomodo IVA, Marooned on Ghostring, Masters of Mind. Nithus, Personal Data Files, Portals of Irontooth, Prince of Thieves, Salvage Mission, Sapies, Sewers of Oblivion, The Shattered Alliance, Space Empires, The Spawn of Fashan, Starfire III, Star Patrol, Stones of the Selt, The Sultan's Pearl, Theta Borealis Sector, Voyage of the Valkyrie, Warlords* and *Wild West.*

Games for which we are currently seeking reviewers include: *Empire of the Overmind, Griffin Mountain, Imperial Data Recovery System* and *Space Ace 21.*

THE CASTLE (Mayfair Games, Inc.); $5.00. Designed by Neil Zimmerer. One 8-page rule booklet, 108 die-cut counters, 17" x 21" map, bagged. 1-6 players; playing time 30-60 minutes. Published 1981.

THE CASTLE is another in Mayfair Games' new line of quick, easy-to-play simulations, ideal for beginners and breaks between the bigger games. The idea behind the game is not exactly original – a group of adventurers, either allied into smaller units or singly, enter a castle full of monsters and treasure to rescue a captive princess. Monsters range from bats, mildews and molds up to gargoyles, behemoths and ogres. Treasures may consist of gold pieces, keys to the princess' cell, other captives, magic items or – ouch! – traps and curses. Players may be fighters, clerics or wizards with appropriate abilities or spells. Fighters are – what else – the best fighters; clerics have advantages against undead and may nullify curses; and wizards have various spells to aid the party in movement and combat. The rules are relatively clear, with a few lapses, and are simple enough for novices to grasp, yet have enough of the feel of fantasy simulations that an experienced gamer who wants a break from more complex offerings can enjoy the game.

As with most of Mayfair's releases, the graphics are quite pleasing. The game is as easy to learn as TSR's *Dungeon* and is a much better game for half the price of the TSR product. As a solo fantasy game, it is easier to play than SPI's *Deathmaze* – especially without the annoying counter corridors that tend to come up as the party moved – and at least as enjoyable.

There are some problems, though. At one place in the rules, the players are instructed, when they encounter a monster in a room, to turn up *all* nonexposed monster counters (originally placed face down). While this seems to imply all counters on the board, obviously only those in the room are meant, as to expose all the counters on the board would render some spells and magic items useless. This is one of the few places where the rules are a bit too vague. Another is in the explanations of the charts on the map; some of the footnotes there may take a bit of thought to puzzle out. The monsters are a bit wimpy, too – even the behemoth and ogre have fewer hit points than the clerics, much less the fighters – but this is balanced out by the number of monsters that must be faced and the traps characters might encounter (plus the nice touch that some of the spells and magic items may actually backfire on the characters); they'll need the extra points.

Overall, if the $5.00 price doesn't seem too high to you for a simple, playable game with few frills, you might give THE CASTLE a try.

– William A. Barton

DEMONLORD (Heritage); $5. Designed by Arnold Hendrick. 24-page 7" by 4¼" rulebook, 14" by 12" cardstock map, 16" by 14" order of battle/terrain chart sheet, 154 counters, two dice, boxed. Two players; playing time 2 hours. Published 1981.

The premise is familiar: One player is the mighty Demon Empire, the other is the noble Alliance of Hosar. There are neutral states to ally, wizards to monkey around with, and terrain to impede movement. However, DEMONLORD has a number of unique features which are worth looking over.

Combat is the single most interesting feature. There are no zones of control; battle comes when the opponents have forces in the same hex. Once a battle occurs, all the embattled counters are pulled from the map; the terrain chart is consulted, and the opposing forces are deployed according to terrain. Thus, Duke D'Ansor's comparatively small force could hold for quite a while against Lord Erush's army in a mountain pass, but would be crushed in a head-on plains confrontation. This is wholly more satisfying than giving a mountain defender a terrain modifier. No CRT is necessary for regular battle, just a "to hit" score, with die modifiers. (The procedure for beseiging fortresses does require a CRT, though.) Generally, combat only lasts until one force feels itself being overwhelmed and makes a strategic withdrawal. Recruitment of neutrals is entertaining. It increases a player's military strength but robs him of victory points. Neutrals are unstable, with die rolls causing shifting alliances. It is also possible to send an expeditionary force to find the mighty Cloud Prince of Lyung, only to find out that he is a myth; the actual existence of neutrals hangs on a die-roll. Obviously, there is a good deal of knuckle-biting in DEMONLORD.

This game is tactically very rich for its size, but quite more complicated than the normal minisized game. Counters can have eight symbols on them – a bewildering amount of information for half an inch. The game plays slowly, but this is only a disadvantage for those who want a lunchbreak offering. Two counters are misprinted. However, one is corrected on the rulebook's last-page errata, and the other can be fixed from the order of battle chart. There is a lot of luck in the game, more than many tactical gamers will like, but the rules give options for reducing this factor, too.

Overall, DEMONLORD is quite a buy. I recommend it.

– Aaron Allston

DIADEM (Fantasy Games Unlimited; $19.98. Designed by Scott Bizar, Bob Weller, and Tim Zorn. Boxed game, with two 18" x 34" mapsheets, 6 page rulebook, 12 planetary record cards, 1064 die cut counters, 4 player reference cards, 1 die. 2-4 players, ½ hour up. Published 1981.

DIADEM is a game of galactic conquest, along the lines of *Stellar Conquest* and *Triplanetary*. The mapboard is divided into 12 hexagonal "sub-maps", each representing a planet, its moons (if any), and the space around it. The area between sub-maps represents the hyperspace zones between planets. Each player starts with a home planet and a colony. Using resources produced on your planets, you produce ships, troops, or planetary screens, invest in research to improve your technology level, reinvest to increase future resource production, or spend it on propaganda and espionage. Victory is won by controlling four systems (or five, in the 3-player game).

DIADEM contains some interesting twists on the "standard" notion of military-economic galactic conquest. Complexity of interstellar travel and resource investment has been minimized; the emphasis is on tactical warfare. Also, I don't remember seeing propaganda or espionage figured into a system for galactic warfare before. Game components are agreeably clear. The reference sheets, mapboard, and counters are all straightforward and helpful. A nice touch is that hyperspace counters are those with silhouettes, rather than outlines, of the unit. Another is that it can take up to three turns after the initial investment is made to produce a unit.

The only major problems I have with DIADEM were the rules governing combat and

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planetary control. A case in point is the suggestion that a space movement point (from phase 4) be saved for retreat purposes after an unsuccessful ground engagement (phase 7). Such movement is explicitly prohibited elsewhere. Also, to take a system from another player, "the assaulting player must gain total and uncontested control of the planet . . . ". Does this mean you must destroy his orbiting forts surrounding the planet? If not, who gets them now? Must you destroy all enemy factories, which have no offensive or defensive abilities? The rules don't specify. A lesser problem is that propaganda and espionage, while interesting concepts, are not much use under current rules – on the average, neither returns its investment value.

In sum, I won't tell you *not* to buy DIADEM, but I don't recommend it. There are better-reasoned space warfare games on the market.

– David Ladyman

DRAGONSLAYER (SPI); $15. Designed by Brad Hessel and Redmond Simonsen. Boxed, with 17" x 22" map, 100 cardboard titles, 11" x 17" battle display, 4 pages of rules. 2-4 players, playing time 40 min.-2 hrs. Published 1981.

The last dragon, Vermithrax Pejorative, is holding Urland in thrall, demanding a virgin every 6 months. You are a magician, determined to rid your land of this dreaded menace. With your usually-faithful companions, you search the countryside for weapons, spells, and other noble fools to help you in this quest. When your muscle and magic are strong enough, you venture into the dragon's lair and do your best to slay it.

DRAGONSLAYER accomplishes two goals which would have seemed to be mutually exclusive. It faithfully renders the movie plot, while integrating it into an almost playable system. SPI extrapolates from the story-line, of course, so that Galen isn't the only magician in play, and more items and companions are available. Each player also controls two troops of the king's horsemen, who are out to maintain the status quo. Used properly, they can effectively delay your opponents' progress. (A suggestion: eight horsemen, in the four-player game, slows things down tremendously – one troop per player seems to play better in that case.) The battle display is a fitting touch. Each of the various magical weapons is strong in some tactical situations, weak or useless in others.

SPI continues in its efforts to produce rules that are short and sweet. Short they've got; sweet they're still working on. Two pages of rules are nice, if you don't hide additional rules in the examples of play on another sheet. Play balance is good among the players, but not with respect to the dragon. The problem is that the first magician attacking Vermithrax P., assuming optimal conditions, can usually do little more than take it down a couple of notches, while being significantly hurt himself. The next magician should then have no problem, but who wants to set the dragon up for someone else to grab the glory? With*out* optimal conditions (the usual case), *no*-one, even Galen, is strong enough for anything more hopeful than a suicide run. More magic, or stronger magic, is my suggestion. Inter-player victory conditions are unclear. And finally, the artwork is nowhere near SPI's usual standards.

DRAGONSLAYER is a simple, but imaginative game. As usual, I think the price is somewhat steep for what you get. If you've seen the movie more than twice, get the game – you'll enjoy it. It has flaws, but they can be avoided. If you like to tinker with and fine-tune the gaming systems you buy, you'll probably like DRAGONSLAYER also.

– David Ladyman

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RAGNAROK (SPI); $4. Designed by Darryl D. Esakof. One 16" x 22" map, 100 counters, 8½" x 11" 4-page rulebook. Two players; three hours. Published 1981.

Here is the Battle of Ragnarok: Odin and his Aesir gods, plus an army of warriors and valkyries versus Loki and his Jotun invaders with their army of frost and fire giants. The map shows the flat Plain of Vigrid between the Rainbow Bridge (entrance of the Jotun) and Asgard (home of the Aesir), edged with forests and split by a bridged river. To win, the Jotun must proceed off-map towards Asgard; the Aesir win by destroying all Jotun forces. RAGNAROK is a 3-layer game – first, conventional troops fighting a traditional battle of flanking and surrounding; second, naked flying women on horseback (Valkyries) who are extremely mobile but ineffective without warrior support; and, third, the heroes (Loki, Thor, the Midgard Serpent) who largely fight a private battle separate from the main engagement, using firebolts, blinding light, and other powers. Heroes interact in the main battle by providing minor benefits to units with which they are stacked; Odin is crucial to the Aesir for his ability to make elite berserkers out of paltry warriors. Combat is not odds-ratio, but consists of a "to hit" roll and a damage roll.

This is a gorgeous game. For once, we've got a fantasy game where non-heroes have a purpose! The main game is as important as the heroic game – even the best heroes can't win if their army has been decimated. Tactically the game is a challenge: the Aesir, with weak but flexible units (particularly the Valkyrie) against the more powerful Frost Giants and hard-to-kill Fire Giants. Strategically, the Jotun are faced with decisions about how many men to put on the Rainbow Bridge at one time (too many men cause it to collapse, while bringing men too slowly on to the map will throw away chances for a swift victory) and how fast to move on Asgard (as fast as possible by marching down the road, open to flanking attacks; or a slow line-abreast approach). The Aesir must choose where to fight: beyond the river, at the river, or behind the walls of Asgard.

Complaints? Blinding light is a shade too powerful. The Aesir can be crippled by bad reinforcement rolls. (Is Thor in Asgard's locker room, having problems getting his girdle of strength on?) The Jotun can lose it all if the Rainbow collapses on a freak die roll. SPI has done their usual blah job on the counters ("Loki 10-3-2" is uninspiring – couldn't they afford artwork on the god counters?). There are a number of minor differences of interpretation which can be raised about the mythology – Loki, Hrym and Fenrir ganging up on Heimdall at the Bridge seems ungentlemanly at least. But – and most criminally of all – THERE IS NO PRONUNCIATION GUIDE! (Quick, how do you say "Hrym"?)

To my own astonishment, I find RAGNAROK to be excellent. It is the best fantasy battle game I've ever seen. My only disappointment is that *Ares* magazine comes with it.

– W. G. Armintrout

SAGA (TSR); $3.98. Designed by Steve Marsh. Plastic boxed, with an 11¾" x 14" map, 60 counters, 18-page 4" x 7" rulebook, 2 dice. 2-6 players; 2½ hours to play. Published 1981.

Grab your sword and make like a Viking! In SAGA, heroes are scrounging throughout northern Europe looking for glory. You get glory by slaughtering trolls, giants, evil elves ("drows"), ghosts, witches, dragons, warriors ("jarls") and other heroes. Glory may also be

picked up at the end of the game by cashing in "luck points" and gold. Gold comes as taxes from countries conquered by heroes. Heroes may also gain followers by beating neutral jarls in combat. Combat is differential (that is, "14" vs "12" is "+2"). Luck points may be spent to modify the die roll. Elves, witches and ghosts use random magic spells when attacked. Battles cause death, wounds (which banish any jarl followers), or flight back to the home country. After 20 turns, the hero with the highest score wins – even if he has already died. The map shows northern Europe sectioned off into irregular-shaped countries.

SAGA is a wonderful introductory game. It doesn't intimidate insecure newcomers, the people who would look at *Wreck of the BSM Pandora* and say, "It looks too hard. I can't play that." It is a snap to learn. Unlike other introductory games, the variety of magic swords, runes, the godly interventions, magic spells, starting positions and magic treasures give SAGA some replayability. The game, although simple, also presents two tricky questions: how often to collect taxes from your tax collectors (that is, before some other player kills your jarl and steals the gold), and when (sometimes if) to kill higher-glory players.

The game has problems, but these are more nuisance than impediment. The rules have holes: Can players look at other players' record sheets? Can swords and treasures be captured? Can two jarl followers attack a monster without a hero being around? Does jarl recruitment come after monster combat, are they simultaneous, or are they exclusive? The character sheet provided must have been designed by someone who had never played the game – some spaces are too big, others too small. The counters aren't explained – you have to guess which are the trolls and which are giants. Witches look like cheerleaders. Some players will dislike the all-or-nothing combat system (if you lose, *everyone* is hurt), the power of luck points (they can neutralize witches, ensure good runes and god reactions, and make-or-break player-vs-player combat), and the importance of good die rolls.

As an introductory game, SAGA is very good. People who play *Sorry* won't be intimidated by it. It is a poor game if you play for competition rather than for fun – luck is too important. Otherwise, it is an average beer-and-pretzels game.

– W. G. Armintrout

SPACEFARERS (Games Workshop); $5.98. Designed by Andy Murkin and Nick Henfrey. One 6" x 8¼" 44-page booklet. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

SPACEFARERS is a set of miniature rules especially designed for use with Citadel Miniatures' *Spacefarers* figures. Described as "rules for science fiction skirmish adventure," SPACEFARERS is just that – a system for playing out brief firefights with small units of imperial marines, Dark Disciples, pirates, rebels or star patrol teams. The rules include the creation of "characters" with two attributes and various specialist skills, movement and combat rules, technical data on equipment, guidelines for forming units, historical background, and two introductory scenarios. Rules are divided into the basics needed to play and optional rules for added realism. There are numerous charts and tables to ease play.

SPACEFARERS is quite complete. What few gaps do exist can easily be plugged by players familiar with other systems, and probably won't be noticed at all by novices. The system is, for the most part, clearly explained. The weapons are different enough from *Traveller*, *Space Marines/Space Opera* type systems without going into "blasters" or overrelying on slug-throwers. And although designed mainly for

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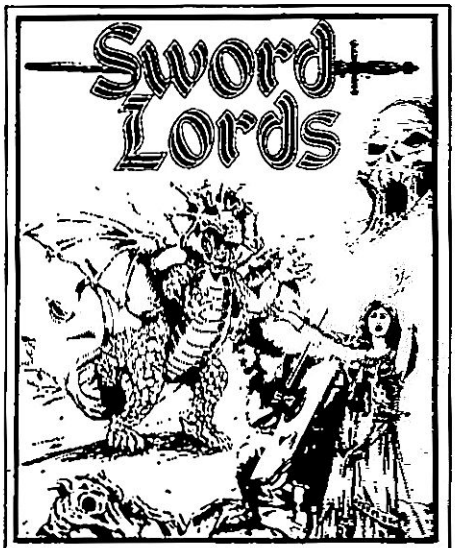

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Spacefarer miniatures, the system isn't so restricted tht other figures couldn't be used – in fact, it could stand as a simple role-playing system as well as a miniature rule set with only minor alterations.

One of the few items not adequately explained in SPACEFARERS concerns the movement matrix. It may take a second look to understand, with its "movement values" and modifiers. One problem concerns characters who have a movement value of 1. A figure with this value can't move, according to the matrix. This means a figure with light armor or a spacesuit (movement value 5) who is crawling (-4 movement values) can't move at all (movement value 1 = 0 meters) unless he "runs" (crawls fast – +5 MV). A bit convoluted. The doubling of the range for handguns for purposes of determining hits is a bit awkward, too, but works all right after you get used to it.

If you enjoy SF miniature skirmishes – and especially if you own *Spacefarers* figures – SPACEFARERS should prove of interest to you.

– William A. Barton

STAR VIKING (Heritage); $4.95. Designed by Arnold Hendrick. Mini-box, with 24-page rulebook, two 7" x 8" reference sheets, twelve 3½" x 4" full-color map tiles, and 154 multicolored counters. Two players; playing time 3 to 6 hours. Published 1981.

This is one of Heritage's new "Dwarfstar" series – their entry into the minigame market. STAR VIKING is a point-for-point adaptation of H. Beam Piper's classic novel *Space Viking* (though nowhere is this credited in the game). One player is the Federate force, trying to protect his cluster of star systems with an undersized space force and a motley assortment of low-tech local equipment. The other player is the Space (excuse me, "Star") Vikings, coming in to raid and plunder.

The components are beautiful for a $5 game (or even a $15 one), with lots of full color. The rules are clear enough that you can read through once and then start play, though you'll need to refer back many times in the next few hours. The variety of counters is fantastic – from 8-9-8 Federate battlecruisers to 0-1-3 bronze-age Hordes – and adds a lot to the flavor of the game. Strategic movement is accomplished through "hyperspace," and is kept hidden by a simple and elegant system. Tactical movement between "sectors" of each star system is more complex but still manageable. Combat uses an "each unit picks a target, then all fire at once" system similar to that of *Stellar Conquest.*

Unfortunately, STAR VIKING is unwieldy in play and suffers from identity problems. I'm not sure what the designer really wanted. If the game is supposed to be "realistic," the economic system needs to be reworked (taxation of a province should *not* be as profitable as plundering it!) and the victory conditions need to be redone entirely; as they are, they simply have nothing to do with the rest of the game! If the game is meant to be "playable" the combat system needs streamlining. While it's easy enough to master, and not unrealistic, it's SLOW! Each time a unit fires, you (a) compare its attack strength with the target's defense, (b) compare their electronic-warfare strengths and adjust the combat differential accordingly; (c) adjust the combat differential again as necessary for map location and/or prior damage to either unit (this last one requires a mental adjustment to all counter values!). Then you roll the die. Doing it once is easy; doing it over and over again for hours, to knock out lots of little units and wear down several big ones, is wearying and ultimately *boring.* This sytem is just too slow for the tactical value it offers. STAR VIKING would be fun if it could be played in two hours; instead, it can take three times that long. I suspect that the illogical twelve-turn (one-year) time limit on the game stemmed from the playtesters' refusal to try longer scenarios.

Nevertheless, I give STAR VIKING an qualified recommendation. It would almost be worth the price for the maps and counters alone! If you like the idea of plunder in outer space, you should probably pick this game up . . . but you may want to rewrite a lot of the rules to suit yourself. If Heritage had to "borrow" so heavily from H. Beam Piper's work, it's too bad they couldn't have done it justice.

–Steve Jackson

SWORD LORDS (Archive); $17.95. Designed by Michael Becker, Keith Elliott and Wilfredo Aguilar. Boxed game, with three 22" x 17" maps, 213 nondie-cut counters, 75 multihex counters, 44-page 8½" x 11" rulebook, 5 reference sheets, 3 dice. Two or more players; playing time one hour. Published 1981.

SWORD LORDS is a fantasy battle game. Using these rules you can act out any of several provided battles, or design your own. The basic game is medieval combat with combat strengths and odd-ratio results tables. Advantages are given for attacking from the side or rear; cavalry and flyers get bonuses for charging, pikemen get bonuses for being charged. No bookkeeping – units are alive or dead, but never wounded. Elite units make a saving roll against death. The main game adds magical combat (wizards and clerics), rules for special races, and an optional combat system using hit location and crippling results. Wizards have a variety of battle uses; clerics are mainly useful for bringing the dead back to life. Lastly, the rulebook provides a campaign game – a series of tables which allow a player to create a personal army and adventure with it along a sea coast. The army's leader is a hero; by avoiding death he may become a "Sword Lord." His army may also progress by picking up new members, by upgrading wizards and clerics to higher levels, and by improving normal units to elite status.

Here is how to put out a fantasy game! There is a counter for everything – scaling ladders, catapults, ships in three sizes, even a 4-megahex earthquake fault! The three maps can be fitted together to make a larger playing area (two are coastline, one is ocean). The rulebook is sturdy enough to last many readings. The heart of the game is the campaign system, which resembles many role-playing games except that instead of one character each player has an entire army. The main game could be a supplement to any role-playing game; the campaign game means SWORD LORDS can stand on its own.

How sad it is that Archive did such a superlative production job without proofreading the rules! The basic game is a husk – no combat rules included. The main game suffers from vague rules and undefined terms. What is blocking terrain for arrow fire? Can units combine their attack strength against an adjacent enemy? How do scaling ladders work? Why are there five kinds of castle terrain on the map? What are hit points? Are dead units left on the map for the clerics, or removed? Is there a time limit to resurrection? How much can a wizard levitate at one time? How can you "see" with a "Conceal" spell? The forest fire rules were left out. The main game's list of scenarios is really a list of suggestions for designing scenarios. The

game is advertised as being compatible for use with miniatures – but the hexes are too small, and the rules only briefly cover figures. I wonder about the stated scale of 1 person/hex . . . isn't a 5-megahex "castle" awful small?

This is incredible – why did Archive do an elegant production job on SWORD LORDS without editing the rules? The idea is entertaining, the components are wonderful, but I can't recommend the present edition. Archive – go back and do the complete editing job you should have done the first time around!

– W. G. Armintrout

TRANSYLVANIA (Mayfair Games, Inc.); $3.00. Designed by Neil Zimmerer. One 8½" x 11" rule sheet, 10½" x 17" map, cover, all attached; 63 counters, bagged. Two players; playing time 30-60 minutes. Published 1981.

TRANSYLVANIA is Mayfair Games' entry into this summer's surge of vampire games, which includes TSR's *Vampyre* and SJ Games' *Undead*. TRANSYLVANIA is, unfortunately, the least satisfying of these releases and is probably the least satisfying in Mayfair's entire new line of simple, playable games. It has cut-out counters and a map that must be cut from the rules and cover sheets. The game itself is a struggle for control of Transylvania between the villagers, consisting of knights, men-at-arms, clerics and peasants on one side and the monsters, consisting of vampires, bats, rats, wolves and skeletons, on the other. The occupation of home territory and numbered areas on the map gain points that may be used to "build" reinforcements. Movement is divided into morning, afternoon and night phases – villagers and day creatures move and attack during the first two, night creatures during the second two.

TRANSYLVANIA does have the advantage over the other vampire games of being exceedingly simple and easy to learn. The rules can be learned in under 10 minutes, and it's possible some games won't last much longer than twice that. The production points, allowing the building of new units, also set the game apart from its two competitors, though the realism of this may be questioned somewhat. And luck plays far less a part in TRANSYLVANIA than in *Vampyre*.

The game seems a bit unbalanced in favor of the villagers. The knights and men-at-arms especially are all but invincible against attacks by any monster except a vampire. And with the set-up and movement of the various pieces, it shouldn't be too difficult for the villagers, if they time it right, to send a strong party to hit the castle early in the game while leaving enough rearguard to protect the village from all but the vampires. The total effectiveness of such a maneuver, however, will depend on how you read the victory conditions. The introduction says victory is only won by exterminating the other side. The section on victory conditions says that occupation of the opponent's home territory (presumably unopposed) at the end of a specific phase determines victory. Another oddity is that the game's title is misspelled on the cover!

TRANSYLVANIA was obviously an early effort on Mayfair's part; the other titles in the line are much superior. Still, TRANSYLVANIA might suffice if you want a *very* simple game about vampires. Otherwise, you might find the other two undead games more to your liking.

– William A. Barton

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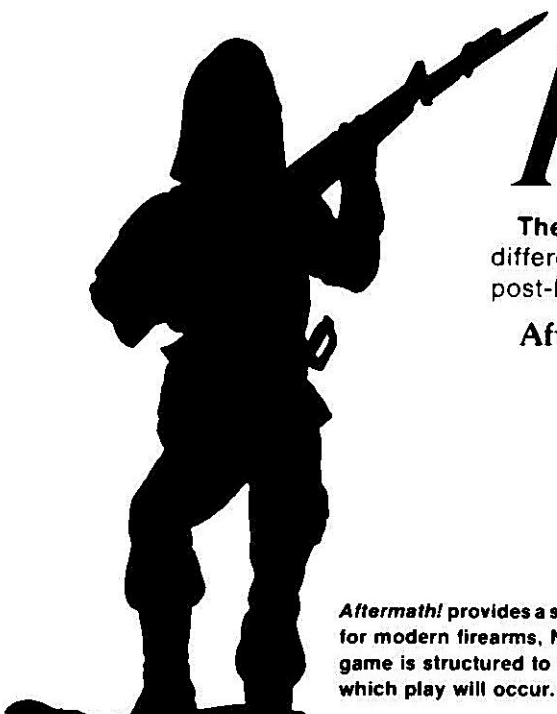

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***Aftermath!* provides a solid basic play mechanic that has been over 2 years in playtesting. Rules are provided for modern firearms, NBC weapons and protections, mutations, survival, high technology and more. The game is structured to allow the referee to decide the nature of the holocaust that destroyed the world in which play will occur. *Aftermath!* is a step forward in the art of role-playing games.**

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SUPPLEMENTS

THE BLACK TOWER (Midkemia Press); $5.95. Designed by David Guinasso and Stephen Abrams. Play aid for any FRP game. 44-page rulebook, 4 detachable 8½" x 11" map pages, 8½" x 11" newsletter. Published 1981.

THE BLACK TOWER is billed as compatible with all fantasy role playing games; an article in TSG 42 pointed out this too often means "Designed for D&D." What with talk of HTK, armor rating, levels, etc., not to mention names of spells and artifacts, there is a distinct flavor of that game here. The theme is an oldie but goodie: Raiders took over the castle a hundred years ago with the aid of unearthly sorcery but were themselves done in by the defenders' magic. To this day, monsters and a horribly altered wizard from that battle still haunt the castle.

THE BLACK TOWER links with other Midkemia Press game modules. It is well organized. The tower's inhabitants all have logical reasons to be there, intrigue exists among them, there's a strong background setting, complete with cryptic poem, and the floorplan maps are clearly drawn. There are some novel monsters and an interesting monster attack chart.

As well done as it is, THE BLACK TOWER has problems common to pre-planned modules. There are too many foes in too small a place, and they are unbalanced in power. This mandates a warriors-only bloodbath type of adventure – spellcasters won't have enough magic to get through and finesse-types such as bards or traders won't get enough chance to negotiate. The monsters have too much treasure; players can't scoop up the riches quickly enough. The only thing to deter them is when they suddenly encounter the big-time monsters, and if they

can handle the biggies they will have too easily devastated the small-fry monsters.

THE BLACK TOWER's drawbacks are certainly no more flagrant than those found in other game aids, and it is as much fun as similar adventure scenarios published by other companies. If you play D&D, and like "dungeon-runs" with the accent on high-powered combat, you'll enjoy THE BLACK TOWER.

– *Ronald Pehr*

THE OUTWORLDS: A STARSECTOR ATLAS (FGU); $6.50. Designed by Stephan Jones. One 8½" x 11" 40-page rulebook. Published 1981.

THE OUTWORLDS is a starsector atlas of the Deneb Sector for use with FGU's *Space Opera* SFRPG. Unlike *Starsector Atlas I: The Terran Sector*, however, this sector is not part of the "official" FGU *Space Opera* universe. Yet it is published by FGU. Confusing? Yes, and it is most unusual for a company to publish unofficial variants for its own game system. But since most GMs graft on what unofficial items they choose to their games' universes anyway, it probably makes sense for FGU to corner the "approved-for-*Space Opera*" market themselves rather than licensing it out to others. The format, however, is different from that of the only official starsector atlas published thus far. Each planet of THE OUTWORLDS covered is outlined on the forms for the United Federation of Planets Department of Interstellar Survey and Contacts Service, with a roughly geodesic map of its surface included. A brief history of the sector, racial profiles of its inhabitants, a starlines map, encounter information and deck plans and data of the Greywolf pirate cutter are provided in separate sections.

The inclusion of planetary surface maps – if a bit crude – is a useful element, helpful in planning surface adventures and excursions. The illustrations of most of the major nonhuman races – which range from bizarre, such as the Green Star Demons and the Cult (presented earlier in TSG as a race for *Traveller*), to the ludicrous, such as the kangaroid kewuss and the troglodyte kobolds – greatly augment the too-brief descriptions. The rumors in the starmaster's section should help suggest adventures to the SM who wishes to use THE OUTWORLDS in his campaign. And the cutter is an interesting addition to the roster of SO starships.

The main problem in THE OUTWORLDS is the sparseness of information for the price of the package – much less information for no less bucks than *Starsector Atlas I*. The only reason the book is as long as it is is that each UFP form for the planet takes up a whole page. And the small amount of data and numerous blank spaces left on the forms means that there's a lot of wasted space on a lot of pages. The information on the history and background of the sector is pretty brief, too – only one page as compared to several in the previous

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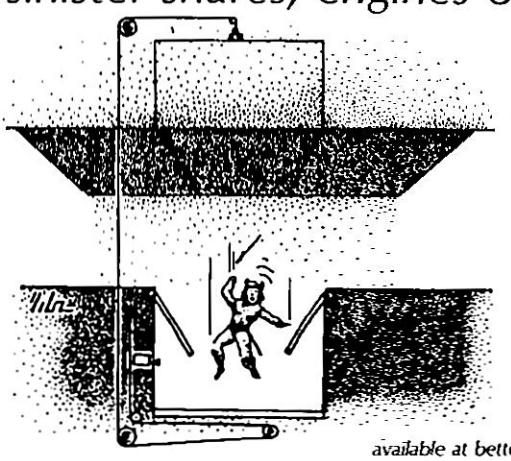

Grimtooth's TRAPS have been presented without game mechanics of any kind; the nature, cause, and effect of each trap has been thoroughly described so that any GM may introduce these devices of delver destruction into his or her games with ease. For example:

Between A Rock and A Hard Place is a clever variation on the common pit-in-the-corridor trap, and will ensure that characters keep on their toes at all times – or they will lose their toes! A standard pit in the floor is activated by whatever method you choose. When a character falls to the bottom of the pit, he will find that he is in too deep to climb out on his own.

When the trap door slams down against the side of the pit, it hits a button on the wall which causes a vial of acid to shatter. The acid rapidly dissolves a wire that runs up through the dungeon wall to secure in place the section of roof above the pit. As long as weight remains on the floor of the pit the pressure plate therein will insure that the block of ceiling remains in place. If all the weight is removed, then the ceiling *(continued on page 18 of Grimtooth's TRAPS)*

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atlas. If all the wasted space had been omitted, the atlas would have been a third to half as long and could have (and should have) sold for almost half the price.

If you don't mind paying for the wasted space and you're a SO player or GM to whom the prospect of adventuring on exotic planets such as New Wyoming and Goshlookout is enticing, you may find some points of interest in THE OUTWORLDS.

–William A. Barton

THIEVES GUILD IV (Gamelords Ltd.); $5.95. Designed by Richard Meyer and Kerry Lloyd. Published July 1981.

Gamelords originally planned to publish just three Thieves Guild (TG) modules. They have now changed to four *per year*, with a subscription available for $5 per "issue" (minimum three issues), substantially less than the cover price. (And prices are rising – the TG III cover says $5.95, but TG IV lists III at $7.50.) While a module subscription is not unique (Judges Guild does something like it), the TG series *is* unique. Three things stand out: first, the verisimilitude of the settings; second, the absence of true monsters; third, the absence of blood lust. It is easy to believe that these are real situations and adventures, not myths. There is nothing supernatural about them; though magic has a place (usually in a trap), magicians are seldom seen. And the thieves (the players) are assumed to be people who would rather *not* kill, but who are ruthless enough to kill when necessary. This is a refreshing change from the standard FRP scenario, and may go hand in hand with the emphasis on role-playing.

TG IV is similar in appearance to its predecessors, consisting of 46 pages (plus covers) of material in two-column reduced print on magazine-sized paper, punched with three holes and not bound. It offers two new twists in the series. First, the scenarios are designed so that thieves can play *both* sides in the struggle between the city thieves' guild and its splinter group, the Black Hand. Second, two of the three scenarios stress information-gathering skills, and additional rules for perceptiveness and senses, and for tailing and avoiding tails, are included. I know of no tailing rules in any other FRP game or module, though I can't pretend to have read them all. An inexperienced GM probably could not handle the info-scenarios adequately. Here *player* skills are far more important than *character* abilities, but luck also plays a part.

If you don't want to use the scenarios for thieving, the third one gives you a thieves' guildhall and its defenses, while one info-scenario describes the buildings, ships, and inhabitants of a dock area. Both could be used in connection with more standard adventuring parties.

The guildhall scenario suggests that the three characters provided should be used rather than existing player characters. Both it and the other scenarios (in which the Guild attempts to prevent the Black Hand from smuggling a treasure out of town) could be used in small tournaments (about three players per scenario, or six if players are on both sides).

If thieves are your favorite character, you should subscribe to THIEVES GUILD.

– Lewis Pulsipher

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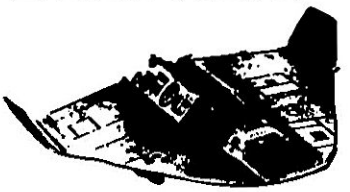

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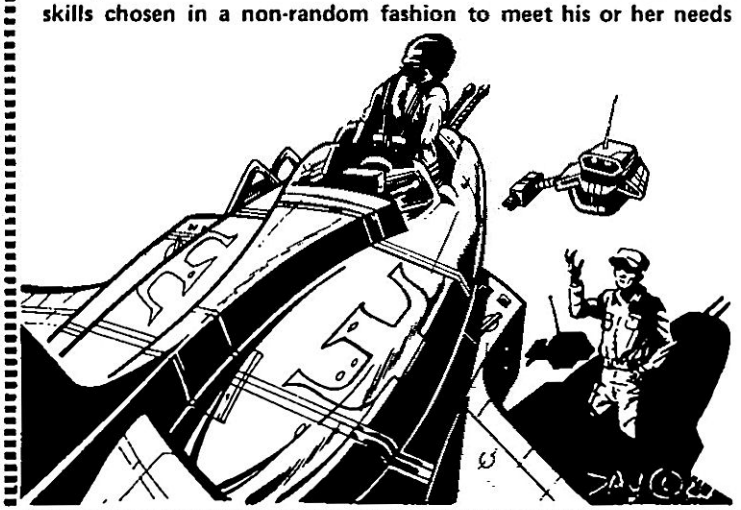

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This extensive and ever-expanding series has for some time represented just about the best available in FRP miniatures. The monsters in the series, while on the smallish side (not necessarily a drawback), are second to none in detail and animation. The series is far too extensive for a capsule review, so only a few of the newer releases will be discussed here.

The largest item in the series is the $15.00 Golden Dragon. It runs about 9½ inches from nose to tail-tip; and, while a little on the skinny side, is nevertheless an impressive casting with all the fine, crisp detailing that has become a hallmark of Ral Partha's smaller miniatures. In addition, the pose is unique: have you ever seen a *stalking* dragon? Another sizeable casting in the series is the Storm Giant, a fine figue in a nicely animated pose that's a welcome change from the "heroic portrait" pose that Ral Partha seems to favor. Another interesting new release is a group of four figures entitled "Servants." This consists of a classic witch-like hag, an Igor-type hunchback, a fairly normally proportioned naked woman (a rarity in fantasy miniatures), and something resembling a gigantic mutant chihuahua that Ral Partha chooses to call a Noki Nuki. An example of their unsurpassed tradition of intricate and exquisite detailing is the Elf Hero in mounted and (suitably heroic) foot poses. Not only is the detail of the costume, such as the butterfly-wing helmet crest, incredibly detailed but the sculpting of the face captures perfectly the elegant arrogance of the character. This is truly a personality figure.

The griffon figure illustrates one of the more admirable aspects of the various Ral Partha figure lines. Never completely satisfied with the way their figures meet the high standards they set for themselves, the Ral Partha sculptors constantly revise and rework older figures to meet those standards and retire the old figures when the reworked figures are released. The Griffon is a case in point: The old figure was good; the new release is substantially better. The only sour note in the new figure releases is the Anti-Paladin. The pose and detailing are fine; the problem is, the figure is way too tall. Ral Partha has been one of the few companies producing fantasy miniatures to adhere fairly strictly to the 25mm standard for figure height. This figure is a little over 35mm high, which works out to something like 8½ feet tall. This might be overlooked in the foot version of the figure, but the mounted version is astride a normal-sized horse (similar in size and pose to the Elf Hero's horse), and the height difference is hard to ignore. It's OK for villians to be big, but they shouldn't look ridiculous sitting on a horse.

The only real problem with this series of figures is the price. They are *expensive*. Collectors may have no objection to paying a little extra for superior quality and higher standards of detailing, anatomical realism, and casting precision. However the ordinary gamer, for whom figures are mainly accessories, is going to find this series useful mainly for an occasional figure to represent a favorite character.

– *Spalding Boldrick*

COMPUTER GAMES

ASTEROIDS (Atari); $39.95. Cartridge for the Atari video computer. Includes one cartridge and an 8-page instruction booklet. One or two players; playing time 1-10 minutes. Published 1981.

This home cartridge is a virtual duplicate of the ever-popular Atari arcade game. Players control a space ship with controls for turning, accelerating, and performing a variety of special functions. The object is to destroy asteroids by firing on them and thus scoring points. A variable number of points grants the player with a new ship. The player with the highest score wins. For more challenge, there are also enemy ships which fire on the player.

This is a true arcade game, with fast movement, blasting things, objects moving on a collision course and enemies firing. Some of the best of the game's features are that the speed of the asteroids can be varied, that having enemy ships to deal with is optional, and that the points needed for a new ship can vary with the player's expertise. The game also includes a special children's version. The special features are well chosen. Hyperspacing to randomly place the ship anywhere, shields to protect the ship from impact, and flips which turn the ship 180 degrees immediately all enhance an already good basic game.

The asteroids travel vertically at the beginning and only slowly work their way toward the ship in the center, giving the player ample time to line up and fire. In the more difficult versions, once a large asteroid is hit it splits into smaller asteroids which do take different courses, but more randomization of asteroid movement would have helped. While the special features are fine, only one may be used during a game.

If blasting asteroids is the thing you want to do then this is the game, but at this price I can't wholeheartedly recommend it.

– *Richard A. Edwards*

RINGS OF SATURN (Level-10, 7475 Dakin St. Suite 507, Denver, CO 80221); $39.95. 48K disk by Dan Minardi for the Apple. One player; playing time 15 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

This is a good example of the second generation of arcade games – the ones that take four eyes and two pair of hands. The player captains the spaceship Goya. He is expected to fly through the "A Ring" of Saturn, rescue the crew of a crippled ship, and bring them back to base. Fuel is short, time is short and enemy ships are waiting. You are dependent on five ship systems. If one is damaged, it can be repaired, but if the damage becomes critical, you will just have to get along without it.

The graphics are a bit unusual. Flying through the A Ring is rather like playing *Asteroids* in three dimensions – the chunks of ice get bigger and bigger on the screen until they collide with your ship. The use of sound adds a lot to the excitement of the game. The pause feature is nice. There are four levels of difficulty, and the first level is not too rough even for a five-thumbed person such as myself.

It appears Minardi was trying to create a game which combined some of the features of a wargame with those of a shoot-'em-up arcade game. I can't say he succeeded. There are few tactical options. Your ship can't maneuver. There's no point in changing speed; almost the whole trip will have to be at full throttle. There is no docking sequence. Trying to play this game with a pair of paddles instead of a joystick can be frustrating. The necessity of memorizing a 4-character code to arm your weapons is pointless.

Still, RINGS OF SATURN is an innovative game, and it will have novelty value for the arcade denizen.

– *Forrest Johnson*

THE TRIBES OF CRANE

You, task chief of the Leopard people wandering tribe of Crane, sit in your great wagon awaiting news from your swift searching outriders. Suddenly hoof beats approach. The outriders leap from their mounts to your wagon flushed with excitement for they know full well the meaning of their news. But one sector to the North the great merchant caravan of the Impala people has been spotted. The order is given "To arms . . . to arms!" You snap your orders, "Gather my captains of hundreds. Let all know the tactic will be enfilade right. Now my arms, my mount." You heard that Kate, chief of the Impala people, has chosen a stand and defend tactic twice before; will he again? You know also that the Impala people are fine warriors as are all the people of the many tribes. This will be no raid of the strong on the weak, but rather a mighty clash of the ***TRIBES OF CRANE....***

The **Tribes of Crane** is a unique correspondence game, allowing for interaction between players and the fantasy world of Crane and each other through a continuous game that may be entered at any time.

As a new player you will start as the chief of one of the many wandering tribes of Crane. Perhaps your tribe will be of the Sea people or Caravan merchants.

As chief you will know many secrets of your people and their lands, but there will be much you have still to learn of the lost secrets of Crane. It will be you who decide if your people will remain in their familiar homeland or begin a journey to new lands as you strive to increase your herds, train warriors, and learn of the ancient lost secrets that can move your people toward prosperity and dominance.

The land of Crane is a complete fantasy world with a full range of geography from the permanent ice of the polar regions, to the deserts, and tropical forests of the equator.

Cities dot the continents of Crane providing centers of trade and homes for the powerful Shamans and King Lords.

The creatures of Crane are as varied as its geography. Cattle goats and the caribou are the mainstay of the tribes, depending on the geography. But horses and the great mancarrying war hawks are important to the fierce warriors. Many undomesticated creatures also inhabit Crane such as the Euparkeria, a hugh bipedal lizard that feeds on cattle in the grasslands of Crane.

Interaction between players is very common. Alliance, trade, and combat are always possible. Combat is determined in part by a comparison of tactics used by the antagonists, the relative number of warriors, and the geography.

The games objective is to increase the relative strength and prosperity of your tribe which is measured by different criteria, depending upon the type of tribe, and thus obtain points. Players try to obtain high average points per turn thus placing new players on a par with those who have been playing longer.

The **Tribes of Crane** may be entered for $10.50 which includes the first two turns, set up turn, a rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased for $3.50.

In Europe, contact Mitre Wargames, 29 High Street, Maidstone Kent, England.

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PUBLICATIONS

THE WAR MACHINE (Published by M.W. Costello, 17 Langbank Avenue, Rise Park, Nottingham NG5 5BU, UK); £6 (£9 overseas) bimonthly. 8½" x 11" newsletter. First published 1981.

THE WAR MACHINE is the first publication that I've seen devoted specifically to the computer-wargames link. It carries a hobbyist flavor reminiscent of the early *Space Gamer*, though the paper and print quality are better. The articles consisted of three reviews, a well-thought-out article on automatic dungeon generation, and a workshop column listing names and addresses of computer gamers and

the projects they're working on. There was even a feedback questionnaire to allow readers to critique the first issue.

Even though this was the first issue of an amateur publication, I enjoyed reading it very much. The various authors seemed to be more interested in informing their readers than in entertaining them. Furthermore, they all seemed to have an excellent knowledge of both computers and wargaming (a fairly rare combination), and their remarks showed it.

Unfortunately, I'm not sure how wide an appeal the newsletter will have, especially in the U.S.A. The first issue dealt mainly with programs pertaining to the TRS-80 and the Video Genie (which, I am embarrassed to admit, I know nothing about), though Mike Costello, the editor, made a call for articles dealing with other systems for future issues.

My personal hope is that THE WAR MACHINE flourishes, and I suspect it will in the United Kingdom. Whether or not it does so in the United States is another question. However, if I can find somewhere to get a draft for £9, I'll probably help it along.

–Bruce F. Webster

PBM Update

BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE
(Adventures by Mail)

Company News. The first and second editions of our game newspaper have been published and mailed to all players. The third edition should be out and in our players' hands by the time you read this. In addition we have sent out rules errata and our company newsletter.

Game News. Fear and indignation grip New Boston following an incident that brought death and destruction to the planet. While at the starport waiting for my ship to land, this reporter noticed a single relatively new destroyer, the GTT Imperturbable, in port. It was sealed but unguarded, standing at the edge of the starport. The calm of the area around me was broken when Governor Zealom himself hurriedly arrived, leading a group of 80 to 100 followers. He slowly moved adjacent to the Imperturbable in a peaceful fashion. The ship's cargo bay opened and a party of 40-50 uniformed troops exited. Each was acting strangely, chanting religious phrases in unison.

Upon seeing this, Zealom's bodyguard immediately opened fire. The effect on the GTT troops was immediate. They became a killing machine. Bodies littered the area and the smell of burned flesh hung heavy. Somehow Governor Zealom escaped to a safe area of the starport. When the battle ended the GTT troops carried their wounded and dead inside the ship, pushing the captured colonists ahead of them.

– Jack Everitt

UNIVERSE III
(Central Texas Computing)

Company News. Quadrant VI is now open. Rumor has it that a new alien race has been discovered.

Game News. Terran spaceships haye stumbled upon an alarming amount of what appears to be battle-related debris in space. No Etuel planet has yet been able to confirm the cause, although rumors abound of rogue Terran ships. At least one Etuel planet is reportedly offering trade bonuses to captains who go rogue and attack other Terrans.

– David Bolduc

UNIVERSE II
(Clemens and Associates)

Game News:

Quadrant I. Major efforts are being made by several alliances to strengthen their control over areas of the quadrant that they claim as their own. Fortifications, strike forces, mine fields and early warning systems are widespread.

Quadrant II. Etuel research departments are working on a mine sweeper to clear out the mines being spread around by Terran starships.

Quadrant III. The Terran invasion of the Muar Empire has had little success and battle groups of Muar Raiders are poised for an attack.

Quadrant IV. Commander Karen of starship 4070K became the first Terran starship commander in Universe II to contact a "Keeper of the Boundary Layer Information." It is said that the "Keeper" can arrange transfer of starships from one quadrant to another.

– Jon Clemens

THE TRIBES OF CRANE STARMASTER
(Schubel & Son)

Company News. StarMaster has grown larger than *The Tribes of Crane* in total turns processed per month. We will be coming out with a new, large-scale, fully computerized fantasy game entitled *Catacombs of Chaos* January 1, 1982.

Rule Changes. StarMaster: Naval (space) combat will now be evaluated by computer. Our program is now in operation and it will make a big improvement in the quality and sophistication of our naval combat results.

The Tribes of Crane: Beginning October 1st, catapults will receive only 5% of their EWS in the open field. Ship catapults and catapults used for siege and city defense will remain as before. This change will improve realism and enhance the game.

Game News:

The Tribes of Crane. Both Crane I and Crane II have a new city. On Crane I the new city of Festil is a large port city lying in the Chasm Jungle. The mountainous terrain makes shipbuilding difficult due to a lack of proper lumber. Festil is the home of a Kinglord, Shaman of War Tribes and Shaman of Sea People. Politically most of the population of 10,000 is Dark Union. The construction of Festil was an enormously costly project due to the very rugged mountainous, jungle terrain. The cost of construction was over a quarter million gold. On Crane II, the new city of Treve is a small port city off the main trade run. The city has excellent docks with experienced shipbuilders. Wood for shipbuilding comes from a forest southwest of Mt. Grouser. Many fine goats from Mt. Grouser to the south are available for sale. Treve is the home of a Shaman of War Tribes. The population of this small city is around 2,000. Both Crane I and Crane II political leaders have been plagued by a growing resistance from local merchants to large trade activities with tribes that hurt their business. Some cities have faced decreasing morale and open revolt due to this.

StarMaster. The Central and Northeast Galaxies are being threatened by the absorbtion globes of the Abzortons from the system Abton in the Northwest Galaxy. The absorbtion globes are highly advanced ships of 30,000 tons each. Each ship is unmanned, guided by a super high technology computer on its mission of reconnaissance. The Abzortons have programmed the globes to attack and destroy any lower life form ship that could conceivably interfere with the reconnaissance mission. As the absorbtion globes began appearing in the Central and Northeast Galaxies attacking and destroying ships everywhere, there was a great deal of effort by the local starfaring races to destroy the mysterious invaders. It appears the globes have one fatal weakness, but it is not easily discovered.

– George Schubel

ZORPHWAR
(Zorph Enterprises)

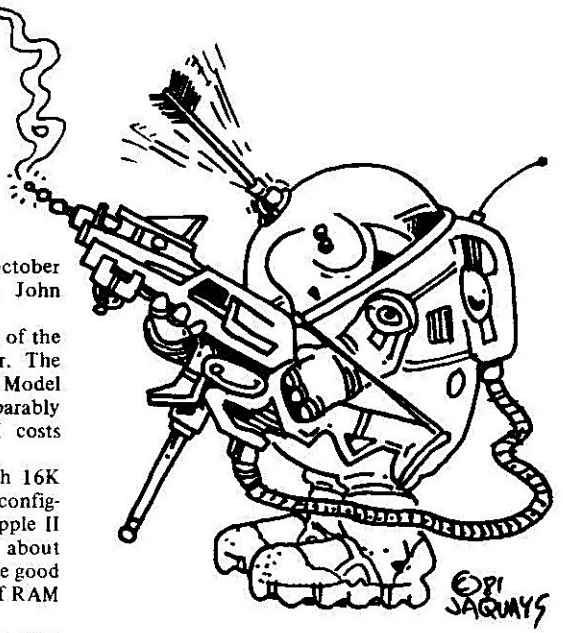
Game News. Game 1 was won by Wayne Lemmon, with a score of 304. Game 2 was won by Sam Moorer with a score of 323. Games 3-5 are in progress.

Company News. The *Zorphwar* tournament will begin, given sufficient entries, on January 1, 1982 with cash prizes for the winners (section and overall).

– Mike Shefler

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the March issue is January 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

LETTERS



I just read Deus Ex Machina in the October issue. Here are some comments on John Strohm's advice:

TRS-80 Model III. Yup, certainly one of the best choices for a personal computer. The amount of excellent software for a 16K Model III is several times that of any comparably priced computer. The 16K Model III costs $999. This *includes* the video display.

Apple II Plus. An Apple II Plus with 16K and cassette reader? FORGET IT! This configuration is essentially useless. A useful Apple II Plus includes 48K and dual disk. Price about $2700 plus a color TV. Almost *all* of the good software for Apple II Plus requires lots of RAM memory and at least one disk drive.

TI 99/4. Apparently Mr. Strohm doesn't know about the 99/4A, which has replaced the old 99/4. This $525 computer has a redesigned keyboard and a greatly enhanced BASIC. More importantly, it can be expanded to run LOGO, a language far superior to BASIC, a language for the future. The TI "LOGO Machine" is about $2000 plus a color TV set.

Atari 400 and 800. Coming on strong. Watch for *lots* of software for Atari computers during the next year from Atari *and* from other vendors. And keep in mind that a 16K Atari 400 costs only $400. Atari PILOT with Turtle Graphics will soon be available – use it to teach your 7 year old child how to use, program and enjoy computers.

Radio Shack Color Computer. This could become the number one personal computer for educational and recreational use. A 32K Color Computer with Extended BASIC is only $749! Dual disk system is $998. Software, instructional materials, and periodicals dedicated to this computer will come on fast during the next year.

Bob Albrecht
Menlo Park, CA

Regarding the AFVs in *Traveller* article in TSG 44, though I am listed as coauthor, I wish to stress that most of the credit for that piece goes to Don Gallagher. The original concept and the bulk of the piece are all Don's; my contribution consisted of some additions, some rewordings here and there, much of the copy editing and a lot of liaison work. While I am gratified that Forrest and Steve considered my efforts toward the piece's final publication worthy of a coauthorship, I do not wish in any way to detract from Don's tremendous accomplishment. He is currently working on a follow-up piece to the article which I'm sure will reflect the high quality of its predecessor and I hope to see many more *Traveller* pieces from him in the future. Don tells me that an expanded feature on the Mercenaries Bonding Authority will appear in *The Journal of the Travellers Aid Society* sometime soon.

William A. Barton
Brownsburg, IN

I was fortunate the other day. I stopped in at my local hobby shop (Author's in Fresno) when lo and behold, there was *one* copy of *Car Wars*. Naturally, I grabbed it up.

As soon as I got home, I read over the rules and, just as I had hoped, I can adapt the rules to use HO scale figures and vehicles. There is, actually, very little adaptation required. I just use a larger system of squares. I mount all vehicles and figures on stands that will keep the ratio the same as your counters to your ¼" and 1" squares. Example: If I use ½" and 2" squares, the stands will be 1" by 2", etc. The only other adaptation will be to number the vehicles and use the numbers rather than the very small counters on the movement chart. *No* change or adjustment in the rules will be needed! It should play exactly as you intended, but will be more visually satisfying.

Ben W. Lane
Fresno, CA

CONTEST

The winner of the Constellation Contest (Issue 44) was Chamicste Gran, of Midway City, CA. He was the first to spot all 36 constellations. The list, in alphabetical order: Aquila, Aries, Auriga, Bootes, Caelum, Canis Major, Canis Minor, Capricornis, Centaurus, Cetus, Corvus, Dorado, Draco, Gemini, Hydra, Indus, Lacerta, Leo, Libra, Mensa, Monoceros, Musca, Ophiuchus, Orion, Pavo, Phoenix, Pyxis, Reticulum, Sagitta, Scutum, Sextans, Taurus, Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Virgo, and Volans. The worked out puzzle is shown to the right.

There were two glitches in the puzzle – which, needless to say, several eagle-eyed readers pointed out. "Capricornis" is not the preferred spelling; ending it with "-us" would have been better. And "Centaurus" was misspelled in the puzzle; it came out "Centauaus"!

Altogether, eight people got perfect scores. (Because of the glitches, some of the eight found only 34 or 35 – but we did not count off for missing those two.) In the order that their answers were received, the "perfect" runners-up were Gary Sitton (Big Springs, TX), Daniel E. Cech (Owosso, MI), Gary M. Scott (Mosinee, WI), Richard Pichowsky (Brooklyn, NY), Doug Loss (Williamsport, PA), Randall W. Nalborszyk (Merrillville, IN), and Cheryl P. Lloyd (Norfolk, VA). An honorable mention goes to Bruce Campbell, of Issaquah, WA, who found 33 (plus the misspelled Centaurus), *and* sent us the same 17 x 17 square with 15 *more* constellations squeezed in (including Cetus, which was the one he missed in the original puzzle . . .) Very interesting!

On the whole, reaction to this one was good. Many readers wrote to say they liked it – many wrote to say they liked THIS one, but didn't want to see it as a regular thing – and a few didn't like it at all. The chief objection was that patience is more important than creativity. So – inspired by Bruce Campbell's entry – here is our next contest, which rewards BOTH creativity and patience:

COMPOSE a word-search puzzle!

The subject: Fantasy and science fiction game names.

The size: Square, no greater than 20 x 20.

Format: Send us (a) an alphabetical list of the games included in the puzzle, and (b) a copy of the puzzle itself, with the names encircled, as above.

Victory conditions: The winner will be the person who gets the most game names (please make it games we've heard of) into the 20 x 20 square. As in the last puzzle, games may read up, down, forward, backward, or diagonally.

All entries will become the property of TSG/SJ Games. (The winning entry will probably be used for a contest, itself!) First place will win a 12-issue subscription; second place will receive a 6-issue subscription. We reserve the right to award fewer (or no) prizes if no entries of publishable quality are received. Entries must be postmarked no later than January 31, 1982.

News & Plugs

The American Wargaming Association has published *The Wargamers Encyclopedic Dictionary*. 16 pages, stapled. Price: $3.50. Available from George Phillies, 1225 Island 204, Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

onComputing has changed its name to *Popular Computing*, and is publishing with an expanded format.

The board of regents of Baylor University has outlawed *Killer* because it is too "death-oriented."

Kevin Hendryx, formerly of TSR, is now working for Metagaming.

New from GDW: *Striker*, a three-volume set of rules for miniatures combat. Price: $11.98.

Chaosium offers *Call of Cthulhu*, "fantasy role-playing in the world of H.P. Lovecraft." Price: $20.00.

FBI has released "Negotiate or Die!", a board game version of *Nuclear Destruction.*

The latest for *SwordThrust: The Green Plague.* Price: $24.95.

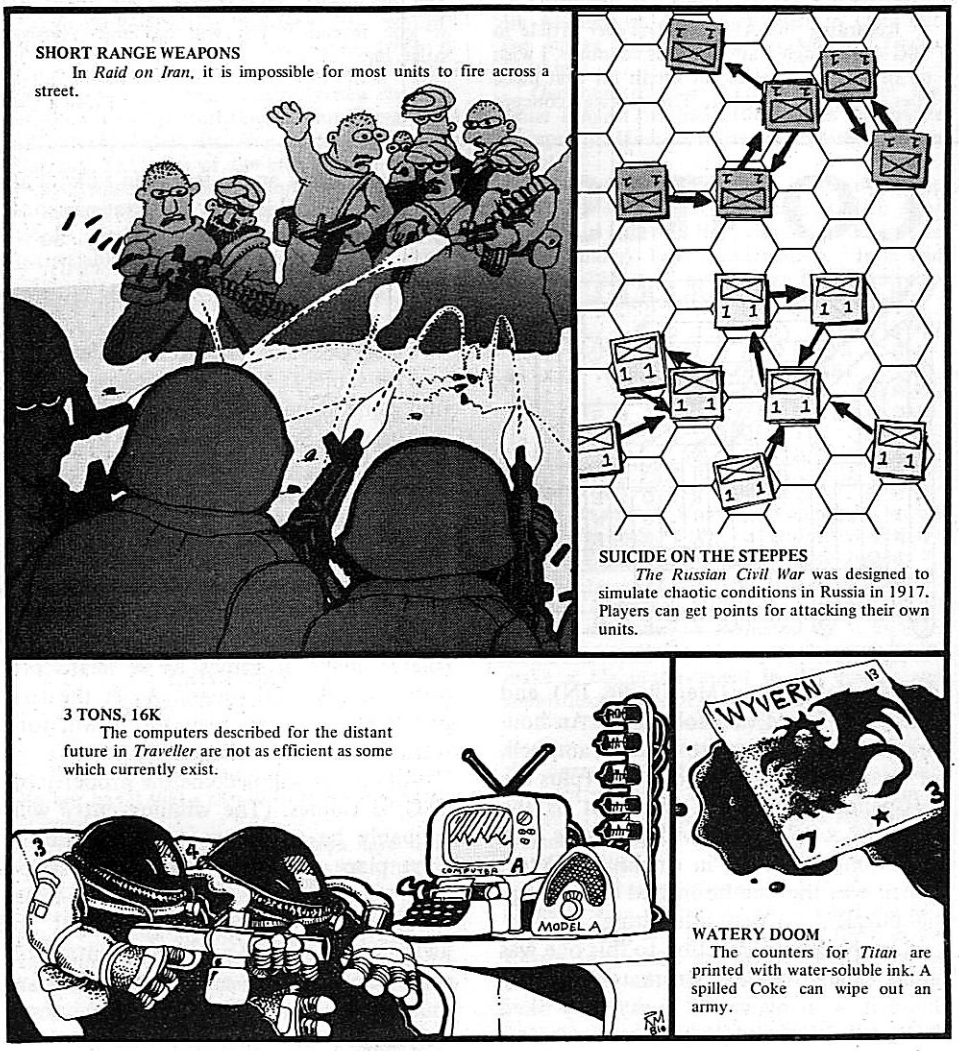
A sequel game to *Ultima* is in development. The title is *Ultima II.*

Another treasure hunt: Level-10 is offering $5,000 to whoever can "either deliver or describe the exact location of the Alkemstone" from the adventure program of the same name. *Alkemstone* is 48K in machine language for the Apple.

Horizon Simulations (107 E. Main 2, Medford, OR 97501) offers *Shadow Hawk One*, a 3-D space game for the Apple or Atari, 48K. Price: $49.95.

Timeline is planning a sequel to *The Morrow Project* called *The Atlantica Project.*

MURPHY'S RULES



SHORT RANGE WEAPONS
In *Raid on Iran*, it is impossible for most units to fire across a street.

SUICIDE ON THE STEPPES
The Russian Civil War was designed to simulate chaotic conditions in Russia in 1917. Players can get points for attacking their own units.

3 TONS, 16K
The computers described for the distant future in *Traveller* are not as efficient as some which currently exist.

WATERY DOOM
The counters for *Titan* are printed with water-soluble ink. A spilled Coke can wipe out an army.

ADVERTISERS

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Calendar

January 16-17, 1982: SON OF GENGHIS CON. RPGs and other games. Contact Denver Gamers Association, Box 2945, Littleton, CO 80161.

January 23-25: GAMES CON. Wargaming. Contact Games Con 1982, P.O. Box 1016, CANBERRA ACT 2601 AUSTRALIA.

February 5-7, 1982: GENCON SOUTH VI. Wargaming con. Contact at P. O. Box 16371, Jacksonville, FL 32216.

February 12-15: MANNHEIMER-CON '82, miniatures, board games. To be held at Mannheim Middle School in Mannheim, West Germany. Contact Grenadierstrausse Kriegspiel Society, 181st Trans Bn, APO NY 09166.

February 13-15: DUNDRA CON VI. SF & RPG con. To be held at Dunfrey Hotel, San Mateo, CA. Contact at 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

June 5-6: GENGHIS CON IV. Games, miniatures, auction. Contact Denver Gamers Association, Box 2945, Littleton, CO 80161.

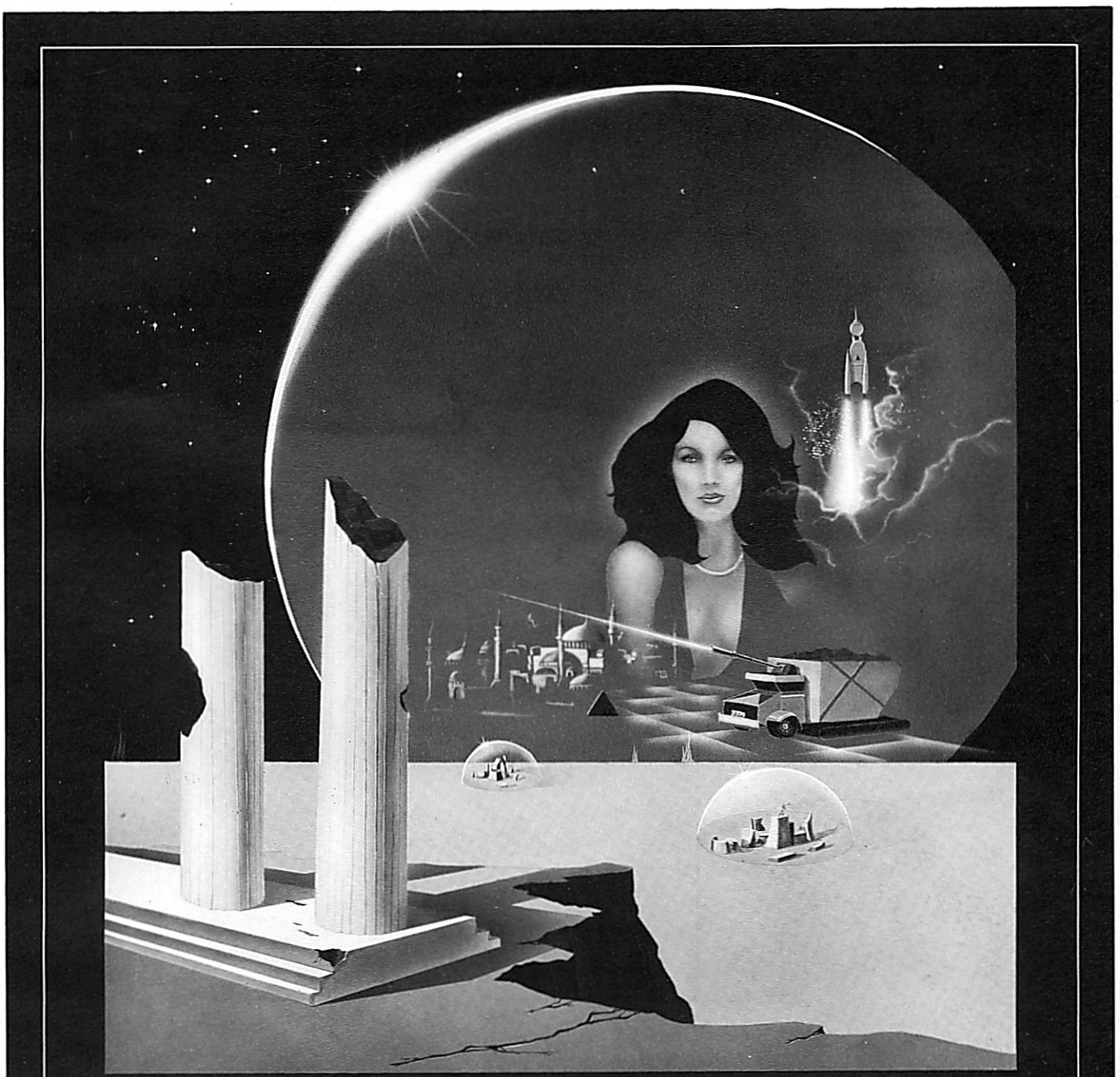
June 18-20: SF CON V (formerly CONEBULUS). Science fiction con with wargaming. Contact at 337 Hartford Rd., Syracuse, NY 13208.

CONVENTION ORGANIZERS – let us know about your con! Free publicity never hurts.

READER ADS

Reader ads are available to individuals (not to companies). $5 per insertion; limit 20 words or four lines.

WANTED: Discontinued SPI games – *Fall of Rome, Armageddon, Renaissance of Inf, Dark Ages, Centurion.* Will pay *well*. Paul Manz, 470 Whitewood Rd., Union NJ 07083, (201)-687-5340.



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Merry Christmas

from the
Ral Partha family